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# SHAKESPEARE'S FELLOWS

Being a Brief Chronicle of  
the Shakespearean Age. By

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**TO**  
**D. A. H.**



## PREFACE

THIS little book is intended as a brief introduction to the study of the personal side of Elizabethan drama. There is little claim to originality: indeed, the borrowings are obvious, and, I trust, duly acknowledged. I hope, however, that by collecting into one place much that is widely scattered I may have done the student some service.

I wish to express my gratitude for the help of Mr. A. L. Attwater, the Rev. E. Iliff Robson, and Messrs. Bernard Quaritch Ltd.

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SHAKESPEARE'S  
FELLOWS



## INTRODUCTION

THE cult of Elizabethan drama tends to divide its followers into two sects, which may for convenience be termed "critics" and "scholars." The former, concerning themselves chiefly with the plays as works of art, care little for minutiae of biography or history; "the scholars" hold the opposite view, that the more an author's life is known the better will his work be understood.

The scholar who spends a lifetime in counting end-stopped lines, or chasing supposed allusions and borrowings to their odd classical sources, is rightly labelled pedant. But the other sect has its extremists too. Mr. Masfield, for instance, quite naturally irritated with the "air at once prosperous and parasitic" of Stratford-on-Avon, remarks of Shakespeare "That we know little of his human relationships is one of the blessed facts about him." Superficially this attitude has much to commend it. Many a man who has begun his study of Shakespeare in one of those

little school editions, with introduction and full philological notes, has learned to loathe the dim, doubtful facts which are urged as evidences of date or biography.

It is indeed very easy to fall into agnosticism : to say that it makes little odds what a man was or when he lived so long as we have his plays and can enjoy them. And this judgment is the more specious because most of the facts which have hitherto been discovered about the Elizabethan writers are a little arid. Entries in Registers, records of lawsuits, title-pages may reveal much to the trained scholar ; but they tell us little of the real man. There is unfortunately no *Repentance* or *Groatsworth* of Marlowe ; no record of Shakespeare to correspond with Jonson's conversations with Drummond.

Moreover, quite apart from the enjoyment of drama or literature, there is a tremendous fascination in the rediscovery of little details of biography or stage history, which to the unsympathetic may sometimes appear rather futile. Too often the "critic" is inclined to scoff at the whole business of research and to despise the "scholar" as "one that has the unnatural disease to be enamoured of old age and wrinkles, and

loves all things (as Dutchmen do cheese) the better for being mouldy and worm-eaten."

The truth lies between these extremes. *Hamlet* will make a powerful impression on the mind of any intelligent person, but the workings of Shakespeare's mind can only be apprehended—and dimly at the best—by those who are prepared to study the conditions in which he worked, and to learn something of the audiences for whom he wrote. *Hamlet* is an entirely different and infinitely more intense experience to one who has made this effort.

"Without tradition and historical criticism," remarks Signor Croce, "the enjoyment of all or nearly all works of art produced by humanity would be irrevocably lost: we should be little more than animals, immersed in the present alone, or in the most recent past. Only fools despise and laugh at him who reconstitutes an authentic text, explains the sense of words and customs, investigates the conditions in which an artist lived, and accomplishes all those labours which revive the qualities and the original colouring of works of art."<sup>1</sup>

The real difficulty in criticizing any literature

<sup>1</sup> *Æsthetic*, chap. xvii.



which does not belong to the immediate past is that the two aspects, the critical and the scholarly, demand entirely different mental qualities. The true critic must be of imagination all compact, a man of almost inhuman sympathy: the true scholar needs the accuracy of a watchmaker, the scepticism of a mathematician and the patience of a Florentine mosaicist. Such a combination of opposing gifts is, not surprisingly, rare—as rare as a good Shakespearean critic.

The purpose, then, of this little book is to provide a background for the study of the early dramatists; to give a few pictures of Shakespeare's professional friends and rivals; to show some of their difficulties and adventures; and to portray in outline the world in which Elizabethan Drama was brought to light.

## CHAPTER I

### STAGE AND UNIVERSITY

THE development of drama in England is intimately bound up with those great movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Renaissance and the Reformation. The "New Learning" had at the outset been cherished in England as a serious intellectual movement by such religious and sober-minded men as Thomas More and Colet; but after the sudden redistribution of wealth at the dissolution of the monasteries, the violence of the reformers under Edward VI, and the cruelty of the reaction under Mary, original issues and ideals had become hopelessly confused. At the accession of Elizabeth, two tendencies began to be apparent.

In London, the fundamental differences of these tendencies are best shown in the constant and growing friction between the City Council, representing what we now call Commercial Interests, and the Privy Council, the inner circle

of the governing class. Even so early as 1570, the problems which were only solved by the compromise of 1660 presented themselves; and one of the signs of the growing gap was the vexed question of players.

In a statute of 1572, dealing with the pressing problem of vagabondage, it had been directed that all strolling players who had not been licensed by a lord were to be treated as vagabonds. A company therefore which was already in the service of a great lord now depended more than ever on his protection. It also meant that the lord came to regard any interference with his servants as a reflected slight to himself.<sup>1</sup> Hence, as time went on, the players more than once defied the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City, knowing that they were under safe protection.

Between 1574 and 1576 the first of several battles between the Players and the City Council was fought out and resulted, as events showed, in a victory for the Players.

In March 1574, the players of the Earl of Sussex requested permission to act in the City;

<sup>1</sup> "Alas that private affection should so raigne in the Nobilitie that to pleasure, as they thinke, their servants, and to uphold them in their vanitie, they should restraine the Magistrates from executing their office."—*A 3rd Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theaters*, 1580.

but the Lord Mayor persistently withheld his licence, even after the Privy Council had asked for reasons for his refusal. Soon after, in May, the Earl of Leicester, who was then at the height of his power, procured a Royal Patent for his players, allowing them to perform within the City and liberties of London and any other city, borough or town. In spite of this, however, the Lord Mayor still refused to allow the players in the City, and further correspondence with the Privy Council followed.

In December, the Lord Mayor sought to settle the matter by an order that henceforward plays might be allowed if very strictly supervised. It has sometimes been rather easily assumed that the Aldermen were mainly actuated by a fanatical Puritanism, but on more tangible grounds there were very sound reasons for banishing players altogether from the City. The preamble to the order says as follows :

“Whereas hearetofore, sondrye greate disorders and Inconveniencies have beene found to ensewe to this cittie by the inordynate hauntynge of greate multitudes of people, speciall ye youthe, to playes, enterludes and shewes namelye, occasion of frayes and quarrelles, eavel practizes of

incontinencie in greate Innes, having chambers and secrete places, adioyning to their open stayres and gallyries, inueglynge and allowynge of maides, speciallye orphanes, and good cityzens children under age to preue and unmete contractes, the publishynge of unchaste uncomelye and unshamfaste speeches, and doyinges, with drawing of the Queenes Majesties servantes from dyvyne service on sundaies and hollydayes, At which tymes suche playes are chefelye used, unthriftye waste of the moneye of the poore and fond persons, sondrye robberies by pyckinge and cutting of purses, utteringe of popular busye and seditious matters, and manie other corruptions of youth and other enormityes besydes that allso sondrye slaughters and mayheminges of the Queenes subiectes have happened by ruines of Skaffoldes frames and stages and by engynes weapons and powder used in plaies. And whear in tymes of Godes visitacion by the plaigue suche assemblies of the people in thronge and presse have beene very dawngerous for the spreadynge of Infection, and for the same and other greate cawses." <sup>1</sup>

It was laid down, amongst other restrictions, that plays were to be censored by the Lord Mayor's representatives, and that a handsome contribution should be made to the poor.

<sup>1</sup> C. C. Stopes, *Burbage and Shakespeare's Stage*, p. 146.

This order seems to have failed to achieve its purpose. Rather more than a year later a further order was made prohibiting plays altogether within the jurisdiction of the City. Its ultimate effect was very different from what the Aldermen had intended.

Leicester's players were led by James Burbage, a "stubborn fellow" and a born fighter. He realized that on their own ground the Aldermen were too strong for him; but their jurisdiction was confined within the boundaries of the City itself. Outside that area, the only hindrance to playing was a lack of suitable accommodation.

Accordingly, in 1576, Burbage interested his brother-in-law, John Brayne, a wealthy grocer, in his scheme. Land was leased in Shoreditch from a certain Giles Alleyn, and thereon was built the first home of English Drama—The Theatre.

It need not be assumed that Burbage was a philanthropist. He benefited his fellow-actors immeasurably, but he hoped to benefit himself still more. He was the first to realize the enormous possibilities of the theatrical business—if conditions could only be stabilized. Under the old system, when plays were performed in

inn-yards, the innkeeper had received the takings of the galleries where the best of the audience sat, the players collecting the pence from the yard. In the new theatre, which accommodated a far larger audience, this system was continued; Burbage as landlord naturally taking the "galleries" as his share. But the Theatre was not altogether a successful investment. It was built with borrowed capital; the "times were bad," and further borrowing, inevitably leading to law-suits, ate up most of the profits.

Yet for all that, although Burbage failed as a speculator, he had made one of the greatest contributions to Elizabethan drama: he had given it a stage. It was left to others to provide the plays.

Acting was still a disreputable profession, and continued so for many years. The players simply played down to the level of their audiences, and gave them these Interludes, Moralities and crude dramas which had once been provided by or under the protection of the mediæval Church.

Nor was opposition to the drama confined to the City Council. Great patrons of letters, like Sir Philip Sidney, also had little good to say of the crude methods of "naughtie Play makers

and stage keepers," whose methods were too painfully crude for educated persons :

"Our Tragedies and Comedies (not without cause cried out against), obseruing rules neyther of honest ciuilitie nor of skilfull poetrie, excepting *Gorboduck* (again, I say, of those that I haue seene), which notwithstanding, as it is full of stately speeches and well sounding Phrases, clyming to the height of *Seneca* his stile, and as full of notable moralitie, which it doth most delightfully teach, and so obtayne the very end of Poesie, yet in troth it is very defectious in the circumstaunces, which greeneeth mee, because it might not remayne as an exact model of all Tragedies. For it is faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporall actions. For where the stage should alwaies represent but one place, and the vttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by *Aristotles* precept and common reason, but one day, there is both many dayes, and many places, inartificially imagined. But if it be so in *Gorboduck*, how much more in al the rest, where you shal haue *Asia* of the one side, and *Affrick* of the other, and so many vnder-kingdoms, that the Player when he commeth in, must euer begin with telling where he is, or els the tale wil not be conceiued ? Now ye shal haue three Ladies



walke to gather flowers, and then we must beleue the stage to be a Garden. By an by, we heare newes of shipwracke in the same place, and then wee are to blame if we accept it not for a Rock. Vpon the backe of that comes out a hidious Monster, with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bounde to take it for a Caue. While the meantime two Armies flye in, represented with foure swords and bucklers, and then what harde heart will not receiue it for a pitched field? Now, of time they are much more liberall, for ordinary it is that two young Princes fall in loue. After many trauerces, she is got with childe, deliuered of a faire boy; he is lost, groweth a man, falls in love, and is ready to get another childe; and all this in two hours space: which, how absurd it is in sence, euen sence may imagine, and Art hath taught, and all the auncient examples iustified, and, at this day, the ordinary Players in Italie will not erre in.”<sup>1</sup>

After pointing out the right rules of Tragedy, Sidney goes on to chastise our Comedy :

“ But besides these grosse absurdities, how all theyr Playes be neither right Tragedies, nor right Comedies, mingling Kings and Clownes, not because the matter carrieth it, but thrust in

<sup>1</sup> *Apologie for Poetrie*, ed. C. Churton Collins, pp. 51-2.

Clownes by head and shoulders, to play a part in maiesticall matters, with neither decencie nor descretion, so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mungrell Trady-comedie obtained."

Thus the players offended the cultured taste of Sidney and continued to make up their dramas unaided by men of letters. When they wanted help they hired some needy hack to do the work for them. Their plays were crude and primitive, of that type of drama which can still occasionally be seen in *The Last Ride of Dick Turpin*—as acted by a small travelling circus.

The Theatre soon had its rivals. When Shakespeare first came to London (about 1586-7), there were three public theatres, the Theatre, the Curtain and the Swan, in addition to those inns where plays were still performed, and at least six professional companies with their headquarters in London: Queen Elizabeth's Players, Leicester's, Strange's, Worcester's, Pembroke's and Lord Howard's.<sup>1</sup> There were many more in the country, patronized by the nobility or wealthy gentlemen. Most of these were doubtless composed of such amateurs as Snug, the Joiner, or

<sup>1</sup> See J. Tucker Murray, *English Dramatic Companies*, 1558-1642.

Bottom, the Weaver, but the total number of professionals must have been considerable.

Such good plays as were produced at this period—*Gammer Gurtons Needle* or Lyly's *Endimion*, for instance—were all written for private performance either before the Queen, the Universities, the Inns of Court or Schools, nor was an improvement to be expected so long as educated men refused to demean themselves by writing for money. But a change soon came.

Bacon in his *Essay Of Seditions and Troubles* remarks that three things bring a State to necessity: the multiplying nobility; an overgrown clergy who bring nothing to the stock; and "in like manner when more are bred scholars than preferment can take off." The problem of the scholar without preferment was one of the minor anxieties of statesmen throughout Bacon's lifetime, and out of this surplus of "scholars" came the real beginning of Elizabethan drama.

Then, as now, the best prizes went to the University man; and so to Oxford and Cambridge crowded the brilliant young men of all classes. At the best a tradesman's son might win high place in the State or Church; even the failures could hope for something better than serving behind the counter. All the same, there

was not enough to go round. Every year the Universities discharged a large number of men who could not be satisfied, men who had become quite unfitted for manual labour, yet too ambitious to be contented with the miserable £10 a year which was the pay of an usher or clerk. The whole problem is most vividly illustrated in three "amateur plays" which were produced at St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1597, 1600 and 1601, a little after this period; but conditions were unchanged, and the anonymous author was intimately acquainted with the University and the play-writing set in London. The first of these plays, *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, is an allegory of University life.

Philomusus and Studioso are two hopeful young students who approach the Muses' spring on Parnassus Hill to drink of learning. They can have few illusions if they listen to old Consiliodorus, who warns them, in a speech of some sixty-six lines, of the trials and disappointments before them :

" If youe will have a joyfull pilgrimadge  
Youe muste be warie pilgrims in the waye,  
Youe muste not truste eache glozinge flatteringe  
vaine ;  
Ofte when the sunn shins bright it straight will raine.

Consorte not in the way with graceless boys,  
That feede the taverne with their idle coyne  
Till their leane purses starve at last for foode.  
O why shoulde schollers by unthriftiness  
Seeke to weaken their owne poore estate !  
Let schollers be as thriftie as they maye,  
They will be poore ere their last dyinge daye ;  
Learninge and povertie will ever kiss." <sup>1</sup>

In Act II, the pilgrims meet Madido, who studies Horace with the aid of sack, and finds his Parnassus near at hand :

"Will you travell quicklie to Parnassus ? doe but carie youre drie feet into some drie taverne, and straight the drawer will bid youe to goe into the Halfe Moone or the Rose, that is into Parnassus : then call for a cup of pure Hellicon and he will bring youe a cup of pure hypocrise, that will make youe speake leapinge lines and dauncinge perodes."

However, the two students think of their ideals and pass on to Stupido, the Puritan, who promises to bring them into a sober company, but they find him to be one

"Who, for he cannot reach unto the artes,  
Makes shewe as though he would neglect the artes."

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<sup>1</sup> *Parnassus: Three Elizabethan Comedies*, ed. W. D. Macray. Oxford, 1886.

Their next tempter is more successful. He is Amoretto, the ladies' man, by whose alluring promises they are rather easily attracted to

“staye somewhat longer in this lande  
To cropp those joyes that Amoretto speakes of.”

Excess produces surfeit and the journey is resumed. They are nearing the top of the hill when Ingenioso, the disillusioned scholar, accosts them and tries to persuade them not to waste their time :

“I talked with a frende of mine, that latelie gave his horse a bottell of haye at the bottome of the hill, who toulde mee that Apollo had sente to Pluto to borrowe twentie nobles to paye his commons: he added further, that hee met comming downe from the hill a companie of ragged vicars and forlorne schoolmaisters, who as they walked scratched there unthrifitie elbowes and often putt there handes into there unpeopled pockets, that had not beene possessed with faces<sup>1</sup> this manie a day. There, one stooede digginge for golde in a standishe<sup>2</sup>; another looking for cockpence<sup>3</sup> in the bottome of a pue<sup>4</sup>; the third towling for silver in a belfree: but they were never soe happie as Esope's cocke, to finde a

<sup>1</sup> Coins.

<sup>3</sup> Holy pence: ecclesiastical offerings.

<sup>2</sup> Inkstand.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. pew.

precious stone: nay, they coulde scarce get enoughe to apparell there heade in an unlined hatt, there bodie in a frize jerkin, and there feet in a clouted paire of shoes. Come not there, seeke for povertie no further; it's too farr to goe to Parnassus to fetcche repentance."

However, they have now reached their goal; henceforward they

"will sit free from enuie's rage,  
And scorne each earthlie Gullio of this age."

Three years later, the same author, who seems to have travelled in the interval, produced a sequel, *The Returne from Parnassus* (Part 1). The old, hopeful illusions are gone, and, incidentally, with experience the writer has immeasurably improved as a dramatist. The *Returne* is not an allegory like its predecessor, but a piece of powerful satire on University life at Cambridge.

Their studies completed, Studioso and Philomusus must leave Parnassus to earn a living. The first person to meet them is Ingenioso, now turned pamphlet writer, who is trying at the moment to persuade a "great lumpe of drowsie earth" to be his Mæcenas. With great pomposity this patron rewards him—with two groats. The party is joined by Luxurio, and all four set

off quietly and speedily for London, "lest *æ alienum* be knockinge at our doores."

A good scene follows when their flight is discovered by a Draper, a Tailor, and Simon, the Tapster. The Tailor has really the greatest grievance :

"They came to mee, and were as curteous as passeth : I doe not like they shoulde put of theire hatts so much to mee : well, they needs upon oulde acquaintance woulde borrowe 40s. for three dayes : I (as I had alwayes bene a kinde man to schollers) lent it to them, and delivered them their breeches new turned and there stockings new footed, even as thoughe I had bene privie to there runninge awaye."

Simon has more of Falstaffe's philosophy :

"O my frozen balderkine of strong ale!" he remarks, "well might I have foretold by the burninge of a pot of youre liquor that some dry lucke hung over my moiste heade! And is Luxurio gone? the answer is, he is gone! Ey, but one will say, Will not Luxurio returne againe? I answer, I knowe not. Ey, but some will object and saye, Did not Luxurio strike of the score before he wente? I answer, he did not." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> II. i. 545.



By this time Philomusus and Studioso have both obtained employment. Studioso is earning five marks<sup>1</sup> a year as private tutor to a young gentleman, as well as making himself useful by waiting at meals and working all harvest time. Philomusus has turned sexton and clerk, using "the voice that was made to pronounce a poet or an oratour . . . like a belman, in the inquisition of a strayed beast." Two scenes show the scholars at their uncongenial work. Ingenioso also has attached himself to another patron, Gullio, the vainglorious courtier who reads the less edifying parts of Shakespeare and makes sonnets to his mistress.

Everything goes wrong. Philomusus is dismissed because he is too proud to whip the dogs out of church; Studioso offends his pupil, Ingenioso forgets himself and speaks the truth to his patron. So all determine to try their luck at Rome or Rheims.

In the second part of the *Returue* (1601) the scholars fall still lower, and unsuccessfully try their luck at quack medicine, acting and fiddling. The play is full of allusions to the chief actors and writers of the time; it shows that the under-

<sup>1</sup> A mark was worth 13s. 4d.

graduate of 1600 was as familiar with theatre gossip as a member of the O.U.D.S. or the A.D.C. is to-day. In one scene, Judicio and Ingenioso sum up the merits of some dozen writers—Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson among them. In another, Burbage and Kemp, the great tragedian and comedian of the age, are brought on to give a lesson in acting.

Ingenioso and Luxurio may be taken as types of the "University Wits"; they lived wild, vicious lives at the University, with the result that they soon became quite incapable of steady work and unwilling to try any ordinary occupation. Naturally enough such men made straight for London, where they could hope to live on their wits. It was a precarious life at the best: the competition was keen, the dangers innumerable. A few succeeded, but most of them simply "disappeared."

On the other hand, there were good chances for the steady student. Colleges recommended their best men to the patronage of the great, and statesmen like Burleigh, who was Chancellor of Cambridge University, were good judges of character, on the look-out for promising youths. Burleigh himself was not very

kindly disposed towards poets, as Spenser suggests :

“ To you, right noble Lord, whose carefull brest  
 To menage of most graue affaires is bent,  
 And on whose mightie shoulders most doth rest  
 The burdein of this kingdomes gouernement,  
 As the wide compasse of the firmament,  
 On *Atlas* mighty shoulders is vpstayd ;  
 Vnfitly I these ydle rimes present,  
 The labor of lost time, and wit vnstayd :  
 Yet if their deeper sence be inly wayd,  
 And the dim vele, with which from commune view  
 Their fairer parts are hid, aside be layd,  
 Perhaps not vaine they may appeare to you.  
 Such as they be, vouchsafe them to receaue,  
 And wipe their faults out of your censure graue.” <sup>1</sup>

But Leicester and Sir Philip Sidney were always ready to give practical encouragement to literature. When Spenser left Pembroke College, Cambridge, he was introduced, through the good offices of Gabriel Harvey, to both these patrons and became a member of Sidney's literary circle, the “ Areopagus.” When these two died (Sidney in 1586, Leicester in 1588), there seemed no one to take their place, and many were the laments from poets that the golden age of encouragement had gone for ever.

<sup>1</sup> *Dedicatory Sonnets: The Faerie Queent*, Oxford edition, p. 410.

Patrons at all times have more petitioners than they can ever hope to hear : naturally many failed to attract notice. But there were others who could never conform to the standard of behaviour which a great man might expect from his train—where there was no place for those Ingenios who could not learn to wait patiently in the ante-room, and not a few of the wilder Bohemians preferred the discomforts and dangers of liberty to the restraints of dependence on the great.

The literature of the time is full of the complaints of disappointed students who looked back with bitterness on their University career as time wasted in the pursuit of barren sophistries. Thus Lampatho, the disillusioned scholar of Marston's *What You Will*, remarks :

“ Delight, my spaniel slept, whilst I baus'd leaves,  
Toss'd o'er the dunces, pored on the old print  
Of titled words, and still my spaniel slept.  
Whilst I wasted lamp-oil, bated my flesh,  
Shrunk up my veins ; and still my spaniel slept.  
And still I held converse with Zabarell,  
Aquinas, Scotus, and the musty saw  
Of antic Donate ; still my spaniel slept.  
Still went on went I ; first *an sit anima*,  
Then, and it were mortal. O hold, hold ! at that  
They 're at brain-buffets, fell by the ears amain  
Pell-mell together ; still my spaniel slept.

Then whether 'twere corporeal, local, fix'd  
Extraduce ; but whether 't had free will  
Or no, ho philosophers  
Stood banding factions all so strongly propp'd  
I stagger'd, knew not which was firmer part ;  
But thought, quoted, read, observ'd and pried,  
Stuff'd noting-books ; and still my spaniel slept.  
At length he waked and yawn'd and by yon sky,  
For ought I know he knew as much as I." <sup>1</sup>

An excellent picture of the odd life which many scholars led in London is to be found in the play of *The Peritaine Widdow*, obviously the work of an Oxford man.<sup>2</sup> George Pyeboard is a student sent down for stealing a cheese from Jesus College, and so pursued by a Welshman that he took his staff to London. There, as he says, "was I turned to my wittes, to shift in the world, to towre among Sonnes and Heyres, and Fooles, and Gulls, and Ladyes eldest Sonnes, to worke vpon nothing, to feede out of flint and euer since has my belly beene much beholding to my braine." <sup>3</sup>

One method of raising money was by means of the bogus dedication. Having collected the

<sup>1</sup> *What You Will*, II. ii. 160, ed. A. H. Bullen.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly Marston.

<sup>3</sup> *Shakespeare Apocrypha*, ed. C. F. Tucker Brooke. Oxford, 1918. (I. ii. 54-)

names of likely victims, the needy author had his book printed with the usual florid Dedicatory Epistle; the different names were then inserted in separate copies, and the author, in the guise of a humble admirer, proceeded to call on his patrons, to offer them this slight token of his respect. Dekker describes the interview thus :

“Sir I am a poore Scholler, and the report of your vertues hath drawne me hither, venturously bolde to fixe your worthy name as a patronage to a poore short discourse which here I dedicate (out of my loue) to your noble and eternall *Memory* : this speech he vtters barely.

“The *Hawking pamphleter* is then bid to *put on*, whilst his *Miscellane Maecenas*, opens a booke fairely apparreld in vellom with gilt fillets & forepenny ribbon at least, like little streamers on the top of a Marchpane Castle, hanging dandling by at ye foure corners : the title being superficially suruaide, in the next leafe he sees that the *Author bee* hath made him one of his Gossips : for the booke carries his worships name, & vnder it stands an Epistle iust the length of a Hench-mans grace before dinner, which is long inough for any booke in conscience, vnlesse the writer is vnreasonable.

“The knight . . . thanks him for his loue and labour, and considering with himselfe, what cost he hath beene at, and how farre he hath ridden

to come to him, he knowes that Patrons and Godfathers are to pay scot and lot alike, and therefore to cherish his young and tender Muse, he giues him foure or sixe Angells, inuiting him either to stay breakefast, or if the sundiall of the house points towards eleauen, then to tary to dinner."<sup>1</sup>

So few traces of the London of Armada days are now remaining that it needs a strong effort of the imagination to picture the life and surroundings of the early dramatist. If we could reduce ourselves to Lilliputians and walk about in the wonderful models in the London Museum, we should realize how small London was before the Great Fire. But the whole life and atmosphere is equally changed.

The Elizabethan—like the Oriental—lived close.<sup>2</sup> Privacy was unknown except to the great. Men slept in garrets where they could. They fed in public, at the Ordinary if they could afford it, with "Duke Humphrey" when they were penniless. Class distinctions were more noticeable than to-day: courtier and actor,

<sup>1</sup> *Lanthorne and Candle-light*, ed. Grosart, iii. 240.

<sup>2</sup> Conditions in modern Baghdad offer a close parallel to Tudor London.

merchant and lawyer, kept each to his own centre, his inn or guild.

These conditions naturally had far-reaching effects. In such a society, gossip played a great part in men's lives. New books, jokes and plays were eagerly discussed; good lines repeated and bad ones mimicked. To the modern Englishman, a visit to the theatre is an evening's entertainment; he leaves the drama behind as he gets into his taxi. But to the Elizabethan playgoer, the drama was part of his life. He never ceased to discuss, quote and criticize. These peculiar conditions explain the amount of apparent plagiarism which is so noticeable in Elizabethan popular literature. Many passages seem to suggest that *Richard III*, for instance, is more Marlowe's work than Shakespeare's, but it must be remembered that Shakespeare at the time was almost breathing the Marlowe atmosphere, and it would have been difficult for him to have broken away from the phrases and cadences of the mighty lines which were at the time dominant in the imagination and talk of all players and playgoers.

Another result of this public kind of life was that all prominent men were well known by sight,



so that quarrels in Court and personalities of all sorts were really interesting. The letters of John Chamberlain or Manningham's diary are good examples of the unwearied inquisitiveness of the Elizabethan.

The conventions of behaviour were, of course, strict and intricate. Gentlemen with a literary turn might write for the amusement of themselves and their friends; but it was the sign of an ill-bred desire for notoriety to print any but the most learned works. The genteel method of publication was by means of a scrivener's manuscript copy. Even sixty years later (1643) Sir Thomas Browne complains that he was only persuaded to print *Religio Medici* because the printer had pirated so faulty a copy.

As the interest in literature grew, booksellers found means of satisfying the public without unduly offending the gentleman author, who, being human, was really rather flattered to see his name in print. Sometimes a manuscript was "borrowed," sometimes the zealous but injudicious friend gave his copy to the printer lest the author's fame should otherwise perish.

But the starving scholar cared for none of these subtleties. In the growing taste of the age for

every kind of literature he recognized that there was a chance for him to make a meal by his pen ; and so by translation and plagiarism, less often by originality, he kept the booksellers of Paul's supplied with their most profitable wares. By 1580, "journalism," as we now call it, had become a regular profession ; and, of the early pamphlet writers, perhaps the one outstanding figure was Robert Greene.

## CHAPTER II

### GREENE AND MARLOWE

POSTERITY has perhaps dealt a little hardly with the memory of Robert Greene. He had indeed many faults; above all he committed the unpardonable sin of making an uncomplimentary (and possibly justifiable) remark about Shakespeare, then only in the "promising" stage. His life—chiefly on the dark side—is better known than that of most of his contemporaries. Just before he died, when the pains of hell rose very vividly before his eyes, he wrote two autobiographical pamphlets in which he spares nothing. He had, moreover, recently offended Gabriel Harvey, the Cambridge scholar, who completes the picture in his *Four Letters*. Yet there was obviously another side to Greene's character. Many of his contemporaries regarded him with admiration and defended his memory against the calumnies of Harvey. His writings, too, are surprisingly pure for the age, and at times show a

very intense moral purpose ; all of which suggests that, however low he sank, he was never quite happy in his wallowing, and had a soul far above the "lewd wits his companions."

Greene was born at Norwich, probably in 1558, though it is not certain to which of several families, all lower middle class, he belonged. Nothing is known of his boyhood. On 26 November 1575, he matriculated as a sizar at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he does not seem to have been a very accurate scholar, as several rather elementary errors in Latin appear in his works. Yet he cannot be said to have wasted his time. Then, as now, a man was educated in the University not so much in the lecture-room as by the friends he made and the enthusiasms he pursued.

What Greene says of himself in the *Repentance* is probably mainly true :

"I neede not make long discourse of my parentes, who for their grauitie and honest life is well knowne and esteemed amongst their neighbours : namely in the Cittie of Norwich, where I was bred and borne. But as out of one selfe same clod of clay there sprouts both stinking weeds and delightfull flowers : so from honest parentes often

grow most dishonest children ; for my Father had care to haue mee in my Non-age brought vp at schoole, that I might through the studie of good letters grow to be the frend of my self, a profitable member to the common-welth, and a comfort to him in his age. But as early pricks the tree that will proue a thorn : so euen in my first yeares I began to followe the filthiness of mine owne desires, and neyther to listen to the wholesome aduertisements of my parentes, nor bee rulde by the carefull correction of my Maister. For being at the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, I light amongst wags as lewd as my selfe, with whome I consumed the flower of my youth, who drew mee to trauell into Italy, and Spaine, in which places I sawe and practizde such villainie as is abominable to declare. Thus by their counsaile I sought to furnish my selfe with coine, which I procured by cunning sleights from my Father and my friends, and my Mother pampered me so long, and secretly helped mee to the oyle of Angels, that I grew thereby prone to all mischiefe : so that beeing conversant with notable Braggarts, boon companions and ordinary spend-thrifts, that practized sundry superficial studies, I became as a Sien grafted into the same stocke, whereby I did absolutely participate of their nature and qualities. At my return into England, I ruffled out in my silks, in the habit

of *Malcontent*, and seemed so discontent, that no place would please me to abide in, nor no vocation cause mee to stay myselfe in : but after I had by degrees proceeded Maister of Artes, I left the Vniuersitie and away to London, where (after I had continued some short time, & driuen my self out of credit with sundry of my frends) I became an Author of Playes, and a penner of Loue Pamphlets, so that I soone grew famous in that qualitie, that who for that trade growne so ordinary about London as *Robin Greene*. Yong yet in yeares, though olde in wickedness, I began to resolute that that there was nothing bad, that was profitable : whereupon I grew so rooted in all mischief, that I had as great a delight in wickednesse, as sundrie hath in godlinesse : and as much felicitie I tooke in villainy, as others had in honestie."

He goes on to remark that only once had he ever before felt stirred in conscience—soon after his return from Italy—when he was powerfully moved by a sermon preached at St. Andrew's Church, Norwich ; but this repentance was very passing, and as soon as he had met with his old companions straightway "put my wicked life in practice, and that as thoroughly as ever I did before."

The *Repentance* continues :

" neuerthelesse soone after I married a Gentlemans daughter of good account, with whom I liued for a while ; but forasmuch as she would perswade me from my wilful wickednes, after I had a child by her, I cast her off, hauing spent vp the marriage money which I obtained by her.

" Then left I her at six or seuen, who went into Lincolneshire, and I to London : where in short space I fel into fauor with such as were of honorable and good calling. But heere note, that though I knew how to get a friend, yet had not the gift or reason how to keepe a friend : for he that was my dearest friend, I would be sure so to behaue my selfe towards him, that he shoulde euer after professe to bee my vtter enemie, or else vowe neuer after to come into my company.

" Thus my misdemeanors (too many to bee recited) caused the most part of those so much to despise me, that in the end I became friendles, except it were in a fewe Alehouses, who commonly for my inordinate expences would make much of me, vntil I were on the score far more than euer I meant to pay by twenty nobles thick." <sup>1</sup>

From the colder records we can fill in some of these outlines.<sup>2</sup> As he took his B.A. in 1578,

<sup>1</sup> *Repentance*, ed. G. B. H., Bodley Head Quartos, pp. 19-20, 24-5.

<sup>2</sup> See the Introduction to *Greene's Poetical Works*, ed. C. Churton Collins, Oxford, 1905.

his travels presumably were made in the next eighteen months. In 1580 he began his literary career with *Mamillia*, a novel in the style which Lyly had recently popularized in *Euphues* (1579). Three years later Greene was back again at Cambridge, for he dedicates the second part of *Mamillia* "From my Studie in Clarehall the vij of Iulie." The book was entered on 6 September 1583—just after he had taken his M.A. degree.

Thence he moved to London, where his writings soon became successful and popular.

"These vanities (*i.e.* plays) and other trifling Pamphlets I penned of Loue, and vaine fantasies, was my chiefest stay of liuing, and for those my vaine discourses, I was beloued of the more vainer sort of people, who beeing my continuall companions, came still to my lodging, and there would continue quaffing, carowsing, and surfeting with me all the day long."

Harvey says :

"Who in London hath not heard of his dissolute, and licentious liuing; his fonde disguising of a Master of Arte with ruffianly haire, vnseemely apparell, and more vnseemelye Company: his vaigneglorious and Thrasonickall braunge: his piperly Extemporizing, and Tarletonizing: his



apishe counterfeiting of euery ridiculous, and absurd toy : his fine coosening of Iuglers, and finer iugling with cooseners : hys villainous cogging, and foisting ; his monstrous swearinge, and horrible forswearing ; his impious profaning of sacred Textes : his other scandalous, and blasphemous rauinge ; his riotous and outragious surfeitinge ; his continuall shifting of lodgings : his plausible musteringe, and banquetinge of roysterly acquaintaunce at his first comminge ; his beggarly departing in euery hostisses debt ; his infamous resorting to the Banckeside, Shore-ditch, Southwarke, and other filthy hauntes : his obscure lurking in basest corners : his pawning of his sword, cloake, and what not, when money came short ; his impudent pamphletting, phantasticall interluding, and desperate libelling, when other coosening shifts failed : his imployinge of Ball (surnamed, cuttinge Ball) till he was intercepted at Tiborne, to leauy a crew of his trustiest companions, to garde him in daunger of Arrestes : his keeping of the foresaid Balls sister, a sorry ragged queane, of whome hee had his base sonne, *Infortunatus Greene* : his forsaking of his owne wife, too honest for such a husband : particulars are infinite : his contemning of Superiours, deriding of other, and defying of all good order ? ” <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. Harvey, *Four Letters*, ed. G. B. H., Bodley Head Quartos, p. 19.

This is admittedly second-hand and hostile evidence, but the *Repentance* corroborates it. Nashe tells the story, "I sawe him make an Apparriter once in a Tauern eate his Citation, waxe and all, very handsomly seru'd twixt two dishes." <sup>1</sup>

It was doubtless owing to his disreputable life that—unlike his contemporaries Nashe and Marlowe—Greene never found a patron to favour him. In fact, after 1589 the list of those to whom he dedicates his works shows a steep decline in dignity until, in the last eighteen months of his life, he seldom bothered about a dedication at all. In the early years he approached the Earls of Arundel, Oxford, Leicester, Essex and Derby; but latterly he had to content himself with Esquires and City Gentlemen. Only two names occur more than once—Thomas Burnaby, Esq., to whom he dedicated *Francesco's Fortune* (both parts) and the *Quippe for an Vpstart Courtier*, and Robert Carey, Esq. To the latter he writes in his *Farewell to Folly* (1591): <sup>2</sup>

"Hauing waded (noble minded Courtier)

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, i. 271, ed. R. B. McKerrow. 5 vols. 1904-10.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Grosart, ix. 227.

through the censures of many both Honourable and worshipfull, in cōmitting the credite of my bookes to their honorable opinions, as I haue found some of them not onely honourably to patronize my workes, but curteouslie to passe ouer my vnskilfull presumption with silence, so generally I am indebted to all Gentlemen that with fauors haue ouerslipt my follies: Follies I tearme them, because their subiects haue beene superficiall . . .”

from which it may be assumed that Greene had received little encouragement from his previous patrons.

Chettle describes Greene as “a man of indifferent yeares, of face amible, of body well proportioned, his attire after the habite of a schollerlike Gentleman, onely his haire was somewhat long.”<sup>1</sup>

Nashe says (*Foure Letters Confuted*) :

“Hee inherited more vertues than vices: a iolly long red peake, like the spire of a steeple, hee cherisht continually without cutting, whereat a man might hang a Iewell, it was so sharp and pendant. . . .

“In a night & a day would he haue yarkt vp a

<sup>1</sup> *Kindhart's Dreame*, ed. G. B. H., Bodley Head Quartos, p. 13.

Pamphlet as well as in seauen yeare, and glad was that Printer that might bee so blest to pay him deare for the very dregs of his wit.

"Hee made no account of winning credite by his workes . . . his only care was to haue a spel in his purse to coniure vp a good cuppe of wine at all times." <sup>1</sup>

Such, then, was the reputation and position of Robert Greene when Marlowe came up to London. Just about the same time, William Shakespeare left Stratford and his bankrupt father. Meanwhile a new stage in dramatic history had been reached. In 1586 Thomas Kyd sold the MS. of the *Spanish Tragedy* to the Admiral's Players.<sup>2</sup>

Kyd was an obscure person, and only a few facts can now be gleaned of his life. He was born on 6 November 1558, the son of a scrivener. He was entered at the Merchant Taylors' School on 26 October 1565, being a contemporary of Spenser; and was dead before December 1594, when his parents refused to administer his estate. In 1593, as will be seen, he was for a time unpleasantly notorious in connection with the heresy

<sup>1</sup> Ed. McKerrow, i. 287.

<sup>2</sup> See *Hens. Diary*, ii. 154.

charges which were brought against Marlowe. Little more is known.<sup>1</sup>

The play was by far the most popular of all Elizabethan tragedies and continued to be put on the boards until the Civil War, and, in spite of the critical sneers of Ben Jonson and a long line of successors, is a genuine masterpiece. It has certain obvious crudities (not all, however, Kyd's work); it is violent, bloody and often ranting, with that veneer of learning, classical mythology and stray quotation which delighted the cultured Elizabethan. Yet its popularity was well won. There are many fine passages of poetry and the complicated plot is admirably proportioned, each scene leading up to the final catastrophe when Hieronimo takes his ghastly, dramatic revenge.

Kyd's influence was far-reaching; he showed his successors how to graft Senecan horrors on to a Renaissance stock. Imitations of his language and situations are to be found in Shakespeare, and it must not be forgotten that he wrote the original *Hamlet*. But his name perished long before his plays. He seems to have been tem-

<sup>1</sup> See the Introduction to *Kyd's Works*, ed. F. S. Boas. Oxford, 1901.

peramentally unfitted to be a successful writer ; he was too timid and morbid to struggle in the fierce arena of literary competition.

Christopher Marlowe was a few weeks older than Shakespeare, being born at Canterbury on 6 February 1564. His father, John Marley, Marlin, Marloe (the name is spelt in several ways) was a master cobbler who ultimately became a leading burgess of his city ; his mother, like Mary Arden, was apparently of better birth, being the daughter of a minister of the Church of England. Christopher was their second child.

The parish records of St. George's, Canterbury,<sup>1</sup> show that he was baptized on 26 February 1564. In 1579 his name is found in the register of the King's School, Canterbury, but apparently he did not stay there very long or attract much notice. In the next year he went up to St. Benet's (now Corpus Christi) College, Cambridge, and matriculated on 17 March 1581—"Xrôf Marlen pensioner"—as the University Matriculation Book records. He took his B.A.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. J. H. Ingram's *Christopher Marlowe and His Associates* is very valuable for the earlier facts of Marlowe's history. Subsequent discoveries have, however, not supported Mr. Ingram's estimate of Marlowe's character.

in 1584, and probably remained at the University for the next three years, as he was made M.A. in 1587. It has been suggested that between these years he, like Ben Jonson, served as a soldier in the Lowlands; but as the only evidence appears to be his accurate use of military terms in *Tamburlaine*, Part II, it seems quite an unnecessary assumption. During the Armada "scare" Englishmen, especially those who lived in London, must have been as familiar with the theory of war as Englishmen in 1918.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, nothing more is known either of his boyhood or life at Cambridge. His College about this time certainly produced one "free-thinker," Francis Kett, Fellow from 1573 to 1580, who was subsequently burned at the stake for heresy. If the theological treatise afterwards found in Kyd's rooms (see p. 67) and said to be Marlowe's property was written by Kett,<sup>2</sup> there was possibly some connection between them. Apart from this nothing is known. His Cambridge contemporaries certainly included Greene, who took his M.A. in 1583, and Nashe, who was at

<sup>1</sup> Compare Sir John Davis's *Epigrammes*. In Gallum 24, ed. Grosart, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> See Boas, *Kyd's Works*, p. lxx.

St. John's College from about 1581 to 1588; but there is no reason to suppose that he even knew them, much less that they were his friends, for Cambridge had a large undergraduate population, and men kept much more closely to their Colleges than they do to-day.

Two works, both translations, can be placed in this period of his life—a version of Ovid's *Elegies* and a translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. The former was somewhat disreputably popular, and went through no less than six editions before the Civil War; it gained in notoriety by being included in the list of works burnt at Tyburn by order of Archbishop Whitgift.

Marlowe seems to have gone to London soon after receiving his M.A. degree, perhaps taking with him the MS. of *Tamburlaine*, which was brought out by the Admiral's Men in the autumn of 1587. It was a sensational success, partly, because it offered a complete contrast to plays of the *Spanish Tragedy* type by its almost complete lack of action, thus giving the great tragedian Edward Alleyn a magnificent opportunity of declaiming long passages of far finer poetry than had ever before been heard on an English stage; partly, too, by the astounding personality of its



hero. The Admiral's, in short, had made a find which they were quite capable of appreciating.

The first part of *Tamburlaine* carries the plot down to a fitting climax in his marriage with Zenocrate; but a second part was called for, as the Prologue explains:

"The generall welcomes Tamburlain receiue'd,  
When he arrived last vpon our stage,  
Hath made our Poet pen his second part,  
Wher death cuts off the progres of his pomp,  
And murdrous Fates throwes al his triumphs down." <sup>1</sup>

*Tamburlaine* was followed by the greatest of all Marlowe's plays—*Dr. Faustus*, which was probably staged in the winter of 1588 or the spring of 1589. This date can be fixed if the ballad of *Dr. Faustus*, which was entered in the *Stationers' Register* on 28 February 1589, was founded, as ballads often were, on the success of the play.<sup>2</sup> The prologue—although

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. C. F. Tucker Brooke. Oxford, 1910.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the following entry in the *Stationers' Register* (Arber's *Reprint*, iii. 12):

"V<sup>to</sup> die Augusti [1596]

Edward White Entred for his Copie under the Wardens handes these twoo ballades following viz.

The one intituled. *A newe ballade of Romeo and Juliett*. vjd

The other of *the Dwell of Dowgate and his Sonne*. . . vjd "

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was written shortly before this date.

possibly a later addition—suggests certain problems :

“ Not marching now in fields of *Thracimene*,  
Where *Mars* did mate the Carthaginians,  
Nor sporting in the dalliance of loue,  
In courts of Kings where state is ouerturnd,  
Nor in the pompe of prowde audacious deedes,  
Intends our Muse to daunt his heavenly verse ;  
Onely this (Gentlemen) we must performe,  
The forme of *Faustus* fortunes good or bad.”

The “ pompe of prowde audacious deedes ” obviously indicates *Tamburlaine* ; but the “ fields of *Thracimene* ” and the “ courts of Kings ” clearly refer to two separate plays. No play of Marlowe dealing with Hannibal is known. The second reference would certainly fit in with *Edward II.* ; but it is generally agreed that this is the maturest of Marlowe’s plays, and was written for Pembroke’s, not the Admiral’s.

*Faustus* was followed by the *Jew of Malta* (c. 1590), the third play in which Marlowe seems to be consciously striving to express the desire for power which appealed so strongly to his imagination. *Tamburlaine* had overcome all earthly opposition and was only conquered by Death alone ; *Faustus* had overreached himself by presuming to possess supernatural power ;

Barrabas the Jew is almost irresistible because he is so completely master of himself, the perfect egotist, unhampered by those affections, creeds, scruples and moral laws which keep ordinary men in subjection.

Little is known of Marlowe's life between 1588 and 1593. His output was small: six plays, a few lyrics and the unfinished *Hero and Leander*. His name appears for a moment in 1589, when he seems to have been in trouble with the authorities. The Middlesex Sessions Roll notes (in Latin):<sup>1</sup>

"That this first day of October in the thirty-first year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth, Richard Kytchine, of Clifford Inn, gentleman, and Humphry Rowland, of East Smithfield, in the aforesaid county, horner, appeared before William Fletewood, Sergeant at Law and Recorder of the City of London, one of the Justices of the Queen, in the aforesaid county, to assign and to become surety for Christopher Marley of London, gentleman, each in the sum of twenty pounds, and the said Christopher Marley, entered into recognisances, under a penalty of forty pounds to be levied on his goods, chattels, lands and tenements, to appear personally at the next Sessions at New-

<sup>1</sup> Translated in *Christopher Marlowe and His Associates*, pp. 148-9.

gate, to answer to all that is alleged against him on the part of our sovereign Lady, the Queen, and not to depart without the licence of the Court.”<sup>1</sup>

Nothing is known of the two sureties, but the fact that Marlowe could provide a bail of £40 and find two friends to advance £20 each is significant. Few of his fellow-writers could have raised so many shillings. (Compare p. 93.)

It is indeed clear that Marlowe moved in better circles than most of the Elizabethan writers. He certainly occupied some position in the house of Sir Thomas Walsingham, to whom Edward Blount the publisher dedicated *Hero and Leander* in these words :

“Sir, wee thinke not our selues discharged of the dutie wee owe to our friend, when wee haue brought the breathlesse bodie to the earth : for albeit the eye there taketh his euer farewell of that beloued obiect, yet the impression of the man, that hath been deare to vs, liuing an after life in our memory, there putteth vs in mind of farther obsequies due vnto the deceased. And namely of the performance of whatsoeuer we may iudge shal make to his liuing credit, and to the effecting of his determinations preuented by the

<sup>1</sup> G(aol) D(elivery) Roll, 3rd October, 31st Elizabeth.

stroke of death. By these meditations (as by an intellectuall will) I suppose my selfe executor to the vnhappily deceased author of this Poem, vpon whom knowing that in his life time you bestowed many kind fauors, entertaining the parts of reckoning and woorth which you found in him, with good countenance and liberall affection. . . .”

Marlowe was also one of Sir Walter Raleigh's literary circle (see p. 72), together with Hariot, a noted mathematician, Warner and Roydon. There is no doubt that this coterie was suspected of atheism and discussed many problems which were taboo at the time. Aubrey says that Hariot was a Deist.<sup>1</sup> “His doctrine he taught to Sir Walter, Henry Earle of Northumberland, and some others.” Raleigh himself

“was scandalizd with atheisme; but he was a bold man, and would venture at discourse which was unpleasant to the church-men. I remember (the) first lord Scudamore sayd 'twas basely sayd of Sir W. R., to talke of *the anagramme of Dog*. In his speech on the scaffold, I heard my cosen Whitney say (and I thinke 'tis printed) that he spake not one word of Christ, but of the great

<sup>1</sup> *Aubrey's Lives*, i. 287; ii. 188. Ed. A. C. Clarke, Oxford, 1898.

and incomprehensible God, with much zeale and adoration, so that he concluded he was an a-christ, not an atheist."

The great success of *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus* must have opened the eyes of both players and writers. Rival companies soon began to look round for counter-attractions; Lord Strange's Men produced a play called *Tamer Cam*, and approached Greene as the most likely man to rival the new dramatist. Greene has described in his *Groatsworth* how he was first induced to write plays, and, allowing for a little embroidery, the account may well be true. "Roberto," the hero of the story, in great misery sits down by a hedge to lament his hard fate :

"On the other side of the hedge sat one that heard his sorrow, who getting ouer, came to-wardes him, and brake off his passion. When he approached, he saluted *Roberto* in this sort.

"Gentleman quoth hee (for so you seeme), I haue by chaunce heard you discourse some part of your greefe; which appeareth to be more then you will discouer, or I can conceipt. But if you vouchsafe such simple comfort as my abilitie may yeeld, assure youre selfe that I wil indeuor to doe the best, that either may procure

you profite, or bring you pleasure : the rather, for that I suppose you are a scholler, and pittie it is men of learning should liue in lacke.

“ *Roberto* wondring to hear such good wordes, for that this iron age affoordes few that esteeme of vertue, retuend him thankfull gratulations, and (vrgde by necessitie) vttered his present griefe, beseeching his aduise how he might be imployed. Why, easily quoth hee, and greatly to your benefite : for men of my profession gette by schollers their whole liuing. What is your profession, said *Roberto* ? Truly, sir, saide hee, I am a player. A Player, quoth *Roberto*, I tooke you rather for a Gentleman of great liuing, for if by outward habit men shuld be censured, I tell you, you would bee taken for a substantiall man. So am I where I dwell (quoth the player) reputed able at my proper cost, to build a Windmill. What though the world once went hard with me, when I was faine carry my playing Fardle a foote-back ; *Tempora mutantur*, I know you know the meaning of it better than I, but I thus conster it, its otherwise now ; for my very share in playing apparell could not be sold for two hundred pounds. Truly (said *Roberto*) it is straunge, that you shoulde so prosper in that wayne practise, for it seemes to mee your voice is nothing gratiuous. Nay then, saide the Player, I mislike your iudgment : why, I am as famous

for Delphrigus, & the King of Fairies, as euer was any of my time. The twelue labors of *Hercules* haue I terribly thundred on the Stage, and plaid three Scenes of the deuill on the Highway to heauen. Haue ye so (said *Roberto*) ? then I pray you pardon me. Nay more (quoth the Player), I can serue to make a pretie speech, for I was a countrey Author, passing at a Morall, for 'twas I that pende the Morall of mans witte, the Dialogue of Diues, and for seuen yeers space was absolute Interpreter of the puppets. But now my Almanack is out of date.

*'The people make no estimation,  
Of morrals teaching education.'*

Was not this prettie for a plaine rime extempore ? if ye will ye shall haue more. Nay its enough, said *Roberto*, but how meane you to vse mee ? Why sir, in making Playes, said the other, for which you shall be well paid, if you will take the pains.

"*Roberto* perceiuing no remedy, thought best in respect of his present necessitie, to trie his wit, & went with him willingly : who lodgd him at the Townes end in a house of retaile, where what happened to our Poet you shall after heare. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

"*Roberto*" must indeed have been hard up,

<sup>1</sup> Ed. G. B. H., Bodley Head Quartos, pp. 32-4.



for he had recently expressed the greatest contempt for *Tamburlaine*.

"I keepe my old course," he wrote in the "Address to the Gentlemen Readers" in *Perimedes* (1588), "to palter vp some thing in Prose, vsing mine old poesie still, *Omne tulit punctum*, although latelye two Gentlemen Poets, made two mad men of Rome beate it out of their paper bucklers: & had it in derision, for that I could not make my verses iet vpon the stage in tragicall buskins, euerie worde filling the mouth like the faburden of Bo-Bell, daring God out of heauen with that Atheist *Tamburlan*, or blaspheming with the mad preest of the sonne: but let me rather openly pocket vp the Asse at *Diogenes* hand: then wantonlye set out such impious instances of intollerable poetrie: such mad and scoffing poets, that haue propheticall spirits, as bred of *Merlins* race, if there be anye in England that set the end of schollarisme in an English blanck verse, I thinke either it is rather the humour of a nouice that tickles them with selfeloue. . . . If I speake darkely Gentlemen, and offend with this digression, I craue pardon, in that I but answere in print, what they haue offered on the Stage."<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of much of this is obscure,

<sup>1</sup> *Perimedes the Blacke-smith*, ed. Grosart, vii. 8.

but it shows that Greene at the time thought little of Marlowe's play and was jealous of his success.

Greene's first attempts at play-making were *The Looking Glasse for London* and *Alphonsus of Arragon*; it is doubtful which came first. *The Looking Glass* is a moral warning to his countrymen, a dramatization of the story of Jonah and Nineveh, written in the Tamburlaine strain and introducing an attack on usurers borrowed from Lodge's *Alarum to Usurers* (1584). This solemn call to repentance was afterwards published in 1594, as "Made by *Thomas Lodge* Gentleman, and *Robert Greene*." Lodge seems to have contributed the comic scenes, and we may suspect that the players, finding Greene's work dull stuff, turned it over to Lodge to brighten up. The added Clown scenes actually have the effect of completely destroying the solemnity of the main story because the Clown, a smith's apprentice, is so thoroughly human and amusing a contrast to the stiff and unreal Ninevites. Repentance leaves him quite unmoved, and he prefers hanging to a five days' fast.

About the same time *Alphonsus of Arragon* was written for Lord Strange's Men. In several re-

spects it is so reminiscent of *Tamburlaine* both in plot and language that scholars have concluded that it was a direct attempt to rival the Admiral's success. It seems, however, to have been a failure. *Orlando Furioso*, which came out shortly afterwards, was another play which owed much to Marlowe.

Greene next turned his attention to comedy, with far greater success. As a writer of euphuistic novels he had already had considerable experience of the right atmosphere. *Faustus* was now Marlowe's latest triumph, and so Greene made one more attempt to eclipse his rival.

*Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is in no sense an imitation, though the choice of another noted "conjurer" as hero was doubtless intended to attract the public. *Faustus* was a powerful moral appeal against the temptations of the spirit as they ensnared the scholarly mind; it was a serious study of the occult. Greene's play is a romantic comedy of singular charm, and the magical portions are made light and amusing.

Greene was so rapid a writer that it is impossible to place his dramatic work in any exact order. *James IV*, another most successful comedy, which seems to have inspired much of the fairy

part of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, was probably written about the same time.

One detail of Greene's dramatic work is worth noting—his faith in the stage carpenter. His plays are full of such directions as—

*"Let there be a brazen Head set in the middle of the place behind the Stage, out of which cast flames of fire, drums rumble within: Enter two Priests."*<sup>1</sup>

*"Exit Venus; or if you conveniently can, let a chaire come downe from the top of the Stage and draw her vp."*<sup>2</sup>

*"The Magi with their rods beate the ground, and from under the same riseth a braue Arbour; the King returneth in another sute, while the Trumpettes sounde."*<sup>3</sup>

*"Vpon this praier she departeth, and a flame of fire appeareth from beneath, and Radagon is swallowed."*<sup>4</sup>

*"Jonas the Prophet cast out of the Whales belly vpon the stage."*<sup>5</sup>

In the middle of 1590, a new tone is noticeable in Greene's work. He dropped writing amorous romances and resolved henceforth "to hate all such follies and to write of matters of some import."

Soon afterwards he appears as a social reformer. In his repentant frame of mind, the sudden

<sup>1</sup> *Alphonsus*, iv. i.

<sup>3</sup> *Looking Glass*, ii. i.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* iv. ii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Epilogue.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* iii. ii.

realization of the wickedness of the professional thieves so shocked him that he determined to expose their methods, and, as he had intimate first-hand acquaintance with these gentry, there was plenty of good material at hand for his five pamphlets—the *Notable Discovery of Cosnage, Conny Catching*, Parts 2 and 3, the *Disputation between a bee conny catcher and a shee conny catcher*, and the *Blacke Bookes Messenger*.

The *Notable Discovery* came out in 1591 and dealt chiefly with card-sharping, "cros-biting" and the tricks of Colliers. It was followed by the second part of *Conny Catching*, describing the methods of horse stealers, pickpockets and burglars. The second part was so much in demand that a fresh edition was issued almost immediately, entitled the "second and last" part. It was soon followed by a "third and last" part, which claims to set forth the actual experiences of Greene's friends. In the *Disputation* he describes a dialogue between Laurence a "foist" and Nan a "shee conny-catcher."

The conny-catchers replied with a *Defence of Conny Catching*, taking the line that their worst villainies were slight when compared with some of the greater abuses which went on in higher

quarters, and accusing Greene himself of "conny catching" :

"But now Sir by your leaue a little, what if I should proue you a *Conny-catcher* Maister R. G. would it not make you blush at the matter ? . . . Aske the Queens Players, if you sold them not *Orlando Furioso* for twenty Nobles, and when they were in the country, sold the same Play to the Lord Admirals men for as much more. Was this not plaine *Conny-Catching* Maister R. G. ?" <sup>1</sup>

Greene's life was in some danger :

"All the crue," he wrote in the *Disputation*, "haue protested my death, and to prooue they ment good earnest, they belegard me about in the Saint Iohns head within Ludgate beeing at supper, there were fourteene or fifteene of them met, and thought to haue made that the fatall night of my ouerthrowe but that the courteous Cittizens and Apprentises tooke my part, and so two or three of them were carryed to the Counter, although a Gentleman in my company was sore hurt. I cannot deny but they beginne to waste away about London, and Tyborne (since the setting out of my booke) hath eaten vp many of them, and I will plague them to the extremitie, let them doe what they will with their bilbowe

<sup>1</sup> Grosart, ix. 75-6.

blades, I feare them not : and to giue them their last adue, looke shortly Countrimen for a Phamphlet against them, called *The blacke Booke* . . . you shall see there what houses there bee about the Suburbes and townes ende, that are receyuers of Cut purses stolne goods, Lifts, and such like. And lastly, looke for a Bed-roll or Catalogue, of all the names of the Foystes, Nypps, Lifts, and Priggars, in and about London. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Gabriel Harvey's brother Richard had ventured to criticize Greene's set : “he mis-termed all our Poets and writers about London piperly make-plaies and make-bates.” Greene was still writing against social abuses, and answered Harvey in the *Quipe for an Vpstart Courtier*—a debate between “Cloth-breeches and Velvet-breeches” discussing the vices of gallants and the virtues of the country. Amongst the characters was a rope-maker. Now Gabriel Harvey's father was a well-to-do rope-maker at Saffron Walden (Nashe calls him the Halter-maker), and so Greene added the following passage on the Harvey family :

“And whether are you a going qd. I? Marry sir qd. he, first to absolue your question, I dwel

<sup>1</sup> *Disputation*, ed. G. H. B., Bodley Head Quartos, p. 40.

in Saffron Waldon, and am going to Cambridge to three sons I keep there at schoole, such apt children sir as few women haue groned for, and yet they haue ill lucke. The one sir is a Deuine to comfort my soule, & he indeed though he be a vaine glorious asse, as diuers youths of his age bee, is well giuen to the shew of the world, and writte a late the lambe of God, and yet his parishioners say he is a limb of the deuill, and kisseth their wiues with holy kisses, but they had rather he should keep his lips for madge his mare. The second sir, is a Physitian or a foole, but indeed a physitian, & had proued a proper man if he had not spoiled himselfe with his Astrological discourse of the terrible coniunction of Saturne and Iupiter. For the eldest, he is a Civilian, a wondrous witted fellow, sir reuerence sir, he is a Doctor, and as *Tubalcain* was the first inuenter of Musick, so he, Gods benison light vpon him, was the first that inuented Englishe Hexamiter: but see how in these daies learning is little esteemed, for that and other familiar letters and proper treatises he was orderly clapt in the Fleet, but sir a Hawk and a Kite may bring forth a coystrell, and honest parents may haue bad children. Honest with the deuill qd. the Colliar.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Grosart's edition (xi. 259) the passage should be printed after "other cause pretended" (line 23).



These lines were suppressed, but recently a copy was found which is now in the Henry E. Hartington Library at San Gabriel, California.

Harvey claimed that the offending passage was removed because Greene was afraid of the consequences. Nashe, however, says :

“ There was a learned Doctour of Phisicke (to whom Greene in his sicknesse sent for counsaile) that hauing read ouer the booke of Veluet breeches and Cloth-breeches, and laughing merrilie at the three brothers legend, wild Greene in any case either to mittigate it, or leaue it out : Not for any extraordinarie account hee made of the fraternitie of fooles, but for one of them was proceeded in the same facultie of Phisicke hee profest, and willinglie hee would haue none of that excellent calling ill spoken of.”<sup>1</sup>

Harvey was goaded beyond endurance, and, having some business in London, determined to claim damages in the Courts.

But Greene was now dying. In the beginning of August he had held a feast with Nashe and other friends and partaken too freely of pickled herrings and Rhenish wine. His constitution had been weakened by continual excesses, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Four Letters Confuted*, ed. McKerrow, i. 279.



NASHE IN CHAINS

*(From a woodcut in "The Licensing of Thomas Nashe")*



dropsy from which he was suffering became worse. In this state he suffered terrible agonies of remorse for his wasted life, his only consolation being the thought that he had done some good by laying open "the most horrible coosenages of the common Conny-catchers, Cooseners, and Crosse-biters." He was, moreover, penniless, and but for the charity of a good couple who befriended him, would have starved in the streets. In such circumstances he wrote two pamphlets, the *Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance* and the *Repentance*. The thought of his deserted wife tormented him sorely :

"But oh my deare Wife," he lamented, "whose sight and company I haue refrained these sixe yeares : I aske God and thee forgiuenesse for so greatly wronging thee, of whom I seldome or neuer thought vntill now. Pardon mee (I pray you) where souer thou art, and God forgiue mee all my offences."

Accordingly he wrote a letter, begging her to take care of their son. Shortly afterwards a friend came to say that she sent her commendations, and in answer he wrote this farewell message :

"Sweet Wife, as euer there was any good will

or friendship betweene thee and mee see this bearer (my Host) satisfied of his debt, I owe him tenne pound, and but for him I had perished in the streetes. Forget and forgiue my wronges done vnto thee, and Almighty God haue mercie on my soule. Farewell till we meete in heauen, for on Earth thou shalt neuer see me more. This 2 of September, 1592. Written by thy dying husband, Robert Greene." <sup>1</sup>

The next day he passed away.

The *Groatworth* and *Repentance* were published soon afterwards, the former being edited by Chettle. Some doubt has been felt whether both these pamphlets are genuine. The *Repentance* certainly reads like a genuine document and has never been doubted. At the same time, however, several printers took this chance of collecting scraps of Greene's work and passing them off on the public as his "last dying words" whilst his death was still the latest sensation. The publisher of *Greene's Vision*, for instance, informs us that there were many "feigned repentances," and adds to their number by pretending that the volume which he is producing is Greene's last work when, on internal evidence,

<sup>1</sup> *Repentance*, p. 32.

it is obviously more than two years old. The *Groatsworth* would be more suspect but for the fact that, after the great controversy which ensued, it would have been exposed as forged work if Chettle had written it himself. Indeed, in the Preface to *Kindharts Dreame* he expressly declares that he "put something out, but in the whole booke not a worde in." Yet it is a curious mixture. The story opens with the wicked behaviour of Roberto to his brother, whom he entices to ruin with the help of a courtesan; this part of the book certainly contains much that is very thinly veiled autobiography, but the discreditable adventures of Roberto are related with a zest which suggests that the author was amused rather than stricken to the heart. The narrative then suddenly breaks out into direct expression of remorse—written in the first person—in which occurs the famous letter: "To those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making plaies, R. G. wisheth a better exercise, and wisdom to preuent his extremities." To Marlowe he writes :

"Wonder not, (for with thee wil I first begin)  
thou famous gracer of Tragedians, that *Greene*,

who hath said with thee like the foole in his heart There is no God, shoulde now giue glorie vnto his greatnes : for penetrating is his power, his hand lies heauie vpon me, hee hath spoken vnto mee with a voice of thunder, and I haue felt he is a God that can punish enimies. Why should thy excellent wit, his gift, bee so blinded, that thou shouldst giue no glorie to the giuer ? Is it pestilent Machiulian pollicy that thou hast studied ? O peeuish folly ! What are his rules but meere confused mockeries able to extirpate in small time, the generation of mankind. For if *Sic volo, sic iubeo*, hold in those that are able to commaund : and if it be lawfull *Fas & nefas* to do any thing that is beneficiall ; onely Tyrants should possesse the earth, and they striuing to exceed in tyrannie, should each to other be a slaughter man ; till the mightiest outliuing all, one stroke were lefte for Death, that in one age mans life should end. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Greene goes on to warn them against an “Vpstart Crow beautified with our feathers,” who is almost certainly Shakespeare. It is fairly clear that the book was not all written at the same time. Most probably Chettle collected Greene’s scattered papers and put them into some order for the Press.

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 43-4.

Gabriel Harvey was thus cheated of his revenge, but with the reporter's instinct for lurid details he was soon on the spot :

"I was suddainely certified, that the king of the paper stage (so the Gentleman tearmed *Greene*) had played his last part, & was gone to *Tarleton* : whereof I protest, I was nothing glad, as was expected, but vnfainedly sory ; aswell because I could have wished, he had taken his leaue with a more charitable farewell : as also because I was depriued of that remedy in law, that I entended against him, in the behalfe of my Father. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Accordingly he went down to Greene's lodgings, he explains, to learn at first hand from the neighbours the particulars of the poet's last hours :

"He neuer enuyed me so much as I pittied him from my hart," Harvey unctuously remarks, "especially when his hostisse *Isam*, with teares in her eies, & sighes from a deeper fountaine, (for she loued him derely) tould me of his lamentable begging of a penny-pott of *Malmesey* . . . and how he was faine poore soule, to borrow her husbandes shirte, whiles his owne was a washinge : and how his dublet and hose, and sword were sold for three shillings : and beside the charges of his winding sheete, which was foure shillings ;

<sup>1</sup> *Four Letters*, p. 19.



and the charges of hys buriall yesterday in the New Churchyard neare Bedlam, which was six shillinges, and foure pence; how deeply hee was indebted to her poore husbände; as appeared by hys owne bonde of tenne poundes: which the good woman kindly shewed me: and beseeched me to read the writing beneath: which was a letter to his abandoned wife, in the behalfe of his gentle host; not so short as persuasible in the beginning, and pittifull in the ending.”<sup>1</sup>

Such was the end of Robert Greene, “whome his sweete hostisse, for a tender farewell, crowned with a Garlande of Bayes.”

Greene’s sensational death re-echoes for years in English literature. Shakespeare seems to refer to it three years afterwards in

“The thrice three Muses mourning for the death  
Of learning late deceased in beggary.”<sup>2</sup>

Greene’s legacy to Marlowe may have been meant as a genuine call to repentance, but the accusation of “atheism” so publicly proclaimed was obviously dangerous to the accused. Shakespeare and Marlowe both seem to have protested, and Chettle apologized to the former in the Address

<sup>1</sup> *Four Letters*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *M.N.D.* v. i., c. 1595.

to *Kindharts Dreame*. No public action was taken at the moment.

Nine months later—in May 1593—matters came to a head. On Friday the 11 May, the Privy Council ordered the magistrates of London to search out for the author of certain “lewd and mutinous libells,” to arrest suspected persons and, if necessary, put them to torture. This search was immediately carried out, and amongst the suspected persons was Thomas Kyd, the author of the *Spanish Tragedy*. He was apparently quite innocent of the charge, but on going through his papers, the commissioners found something more dangerous still. It was part of a theological treatise denying the divine nature of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

“And to beleue forsooth,” says the writer, “that this nature subiect to theis infirmities [hunger, thirst, etc.] & passions is God or any part of the diuine essence what is it other but to make God mightie & of power of thone part weak & impotent of thother part which thing to think of wer madness and follie To persuaue others impieties.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brit. Mus., Harl. MS. 6848, f. 185.

<sup>2</sup> *Kyd's Works*, cxi.

Such opinions at a time when disagreement with the teaching of the church was regarded as high treason were naturally terrible and alarming to the authorities.

Kyd was tortured, but could give no explanation except that the incriminating document had been accidentally left with his papers by Marlowe when they had been sharing a study some two years before. The Privy Council were probably not sorry to have an opportunity of laying hands on "Atheist" Marlowe, and possibly they hoped by their inquiries to incriminate Sir Walter Raleigh. On the 18th a warrant was issued to "Henry Maunder, one of the messengers of her Majesty's Chamber to repaire to the house of Mr. Thomas Walsingham in Kent, or to anie other place where he shall understand Christofer Marlow to be remayning, and by vertue thereof to apprehend and bring him to the Court in his companie. And in case of need to require ayd."

Two days later it is recorded: "This daie Christofer Marley of London, gentleman, being sent for by warrant from their Lordships, hath entered his appearance accordinglie for his indemnity therein, and is commaunded to give his daily attendaunce on their Lordships untill he

shalbe lycensed to the contrary.”<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the Lord Keeper Puckering set about procuring evidence. Soon a certain Richard Baines came forward with a long and dreadful list of accusations which were considered so important that a copy was made and sent to the Queen.

Baines accused Marlowe of the foulest blasphemies and all kinds of loose talk against religion and the state. A few of the charges are worth noticing :

“He affirmeth that Moyses was but a Iugler, and that one Heriots being Sir W. Raleighs man, can do more than he.”

“That the first beginning of Religionn was only to keep men in awe. . . .”

“That if ther be any God or good Religion then it is the Papistes, because the service of God is performed w<sup>th</sup> more ceremonies, as elevation of the masse, organs, singing men, shaven crownes, &c. That all protestantes are Hypocriticall asses. . . .”

“That all thei that loue not Tobacco . . . were fooles. . . .”

“That he had as good right to coine as the Queen of Englande, and that he was acquainted with one Poole, a prisoner in newgate, who hath

<sup>1</sup> *Acts of the Privy Council*, ed. J. R. Dasent, xxiv. 244.

great skill in mixture of mettalls, and hauing learned some thinges of him, he ment, through the help of a cunning stampmaker to coin French crownes, pistolets, and English shillings. . . .”

“That one Ric Chomeley hath confessed that he was perswaded by Marloes reasons to become an Atheist.”

“These things, with many other, shall by good and honest witnes be aproved to be his opinions and comon speeches and that this Marlow doth not only hould them himself, but almost into every company he cometh he perswadeth men to Atheism willing them not to be afeard of bugbeares and hobgoblins and vtterly scorning both God and his ministers as I Richard Baines will Iustify and approue both by mine oth and the testimony of many honest men, and almost al men with whome he hath conversed any time will testify the same, and as I think, all men in christianity ought to indevor that the mouth of so dangerous a member may be stopped.”<sup>1</sup>

How far all these charges are to be believed is rather doubtful. Baines is by no means the only witness against Marlowe's orthodoxy, though the others do not go so far in their accusations. The Richard Cholmeley whom he is alleged to have persuaded to atheism seems to have been a

<sup>1</sup> Harl. MS. 6848, f. 185; *Kyd's Works*, ed. Boas, cxiv.

dangerous character. Two other documents in the same collection in the British Museum deal with his case. Both are reports of Puckering's spies, and as they throw some light on Marlowe's friends they are here printed almost in full.

The first is headed "Remembrannces of wordes & matter againste Ric Cholmeley" <sup>1</sup>:

"That hee speaketh in generall all evill of the Counsell; sayenge that they are all Athiestes & machia villians, especially my Lord Admirall.

"That hee made certen libellious verses in Comendacon of papistes & seminary priestes very greatly inveighenge againste the State, amonge w<sup>ch</sup> lynes this was one, Nor may the Prince deny the Papall Crowne.

"That hee had a certen booke (as he saieth) deliv[er]ed him by S<sup>r</sup> Rob<sup>t</sup> Cecill of whom hee geueth very scandalous reportes. that hee should incite him to consider thereof & to frame verses & libells in the Comendacon of constant Priestes & vertuous Recusantes, this booke is in custodie & is called an Epistle of Coumforte & is printed at Paris.

"That hee railes at M<sup>r</sup> Topcliffe <sup>2</sup> & hath written another libell jointlye againste S<sup>r</sup> ffrancis

<sup>1</sup> Harl. MS. 6848, f. 190.

<sup>2</sup> Topcliffe was at the head of the "detective force" of the time.

Drake & Justice Younge whom hee saith hee will couple vp together because hee hateth them alike.

“That when the muteny happened after the Portingale voyage in the Strande hee said that hee repented him of nothings more then that hee had not killed my Lord Threasor w<sup>th</sup> his owne handes sayenge that hee could neu[er] haue done god better seruice, this was spoken in the hearinge of francis Clerke & many other Souldiours.

“That he saith hee doeth entierly hate the Lord Chamberleyn & hath good cause so to doe.

“That hee saith & verely beleueth that one Marlowe is able to shewe more sounde reasons for Atheisme then any devine in Englande is able to geue to prove devinitie & that Marloe tolde him that hee hath read the Atheist lecture to S<sup>r</sup> Walter Raliegh & others.

“That hee so highly esteemeth his owne witt & Judgement that he saith that no man are sooner deceyued & abused then the Counsell themselves & that hee can goe beyonde and cossen them as hee liste & that if hee make any Complainge in behalfe of the Queene hee shall not onely bee pñtely heard & enterteyned, but hee will so vrge the Counsell for money that w<sup>th</sup>out hee have what hee liste hee will doe nothings.

“That beinge imployed by some of her Mat<sup>es</sup> Prevy Counsaile for the apprehenson of Papistes & other daungerous men hee vsed as hee saieth to take money of them & would lett them passe in spighte of the Councell.

“That hee saieth that Willm Parry was hanged drawen & quartered but in Jeste, that hee was a grosse asse over reached by Conninge, & that in trueth hee neu[er] meante to kill the Queene more then himselfe had.”

The second of the Cholmeley papers reads :

“Righte worshipfull whereas I p[ro]mised to sende you worde when Cholmeley was w<sup>th</sup> mee ; these are to lett you vnderstande that hee hath not yet bene w<sup>th</sup> mee for that hee doeth partely suspecte that I will bewray his villanye & and his companye, But yesterday hee sente two of his companions to mee to knowe if I woulde Joyne w<sup>th</sup> him in familiaritie & become of their dampnable Crue. I sothed the villaynes w<sup>th</sup> faire wordes in their follies because I would thereby dive into the secretes of their develishe hartes that I mighte the better bewray their purposes to drawe her mat<sup>es</sup> subiects to bee Athiestes, their practise is after her mat<sup>es</sup> decease to make a king amonge themselues & liue accordinge to their owne lawes, and this saieth Cholmeley wilbee done easely, because they bee & shortely wilbe



by his & and his felowes p[er]suasions as many of their opynion as of any other religion Mr. Cholmeley his mann[er] of p[ro]ceedinge in seducinge the Queenes subiects is first to make slaunderous reportes of the most noble peeres & honourable Counsailors, as the Lord Threasorer the Lord Chamberleyn the Lord Admirall, Sr Rob<sup>t</sup> Cecill, These saieth hee haue p[ro]founde wittes, bee sounde Athiestes & their liues & deedes shewe that they thinke their soules doe ende vanishe & p[er]lishe w<sup>th</sup> their bodies.

“His second course is to make a Jeste of the Scripture w<sup>th</sup> these fearefull horrible & damnable speeches, . . . that Moyses was a Jugler & Aaron a Cosoner the one for his miracles to Pharas to prove there was a god, & the other for takinge the Earinges of the children of Israell to make a golden calf w<sup>th</sup> many other blasphemous speeches of the devine essence of god w<sup>ch</sup> I feare to rehearse This cursed Cholmeley hath LX of his company & hee is seldome from his felowes & therefore I beseech yo<sup>r</sup> worship haue a speciall care of yo<sup>r</sup> selfe in apprehendinge him for they bee resolute murderinge myndes

Yo<sup>r</sup> worshippes ”

There is no signature.

Both documents are strongly reminiscent of a passage in *Edward II.* :

"*Spencer*. Then *Balduck*, you must cast the scholler off,  
And learne to court it like a Gentleman,  
Tis not a black coate and a little band,  
A Veluet cap'de cloake, fac'st before with Serge,  
And smelling to a Nosegay all the day,  
Or holding of a napkin in your hand,  
Or saying a long grace at a tables end,  
Or making lowe legs to a noble man,  
Or looking downward, with your eye lids close,  
And saying, trulie ant may please your honor,  
Can get you any fauour with great men,  
You must be proud, bold, pleasant, resolute,  
And now and then, stab as occasion serues."<sup>1</sup>

Marlowe's case, however, was taken out of the hands of the Privy Council. The copy of Baines' accusations which had been laid before the Queen is endorsed "A Note deliuered on Whitsun eye last of the most horrible blasphemes utteryd by Cristofer Marly who within III dayes after came to a soden and fearefull end of his life." There are several accounts of Marlowe's death which all differ in details, but the main story seems clear enough. The earliest and longest narrative is to be found in Thomas Beard's *Theatre of God's Judgements*, a puritan collection of anecdotes illustrating the theme gathered from all sorts of sources. Beard is certainly a partial

<sup>1</sup> xi. 751-63.

and unfavourable witness, but his account is sufficiently accurate in most of the incidents to be accepted as not far from the truth. He is, moreover, corroborated by Francis Meres in the *Palladis Tamia*, who refers his readers to the passage in Beard's book :

“ *Marlin*, by profession a scholler . . . but by practise a play-maker, and a Poet of scurrilitie, who by giuing too large a swinge to his owne wit, and suffering his lust to haue the full raines, fell (not without iust desert) to that outrage and extremitie, that he denied God and his sonne Christ, (as it is credibly reported) wrote bookes against it, affirming our Sauieur to be but a deceiuer, and *Moses* to be but a coniurer and seducer of the people, and the holy Bible to be but vaine and idle stories, and all religion but a deuice of pollicie. But see what a hooke the Lord put in the nostrils of this barking dogge : It so fell out, that in London streets as he purposed to stab one whom hee ought a grudge vnto with his dagger, the other party perceiuing so auoided the stroke, that withall catching hold of his wrest, he stabbed his owne dagger into his owne head, in such sort, that notwithstanding all the meanes of surgerie that could be wrought, hee shortly after died thereof. The manner of his death being so terrible (for he euen cursed

and blasphemed to his last gaspe, and together with his breath an oth flew out of his mouth) that it was not only a manifest signe of Gods iudgement, but also an horrible and fearefull terrour to all that beheld him. But herein did the iustice of God most notably appeare, in that hee compelled his owne hand which had written those blasphemies to be the instrument to punish him, and that in his braine, which had deuised the same."

The affair took place at Deptford, and is noticed in the parish register of St. Nicholas Church where Marlowe was buried. The entry in the list of burials reads—

Christopher Marlow slain by ffancis  
(Buried) Archer; the .1. of June (1593)

Kyd's position was now precarious, as only Marlowe could have proved his innocence. He therefore wrote a pathetic letter to the Lord Keeper Puckering laying the blame on the dead Marlowe, and excusing himself for not having spoken out sooner by his respect for Marlowe's illustrious friends.

After suggesting that he is afraid the Lord Keeper will suspect him of "Atheisme, a deadlie thing w<sup>ch</sup> I was vndeserved chargd w<sup>th</sup>all," he

goes on to explain his relations with the dead Marlowe :

"When I was first suspected for that libell that concern'd the State, amongst those waste and idle papers (w<sup>ch</sup> I carde not for) & w<sup>ch</sup> vnaskt I did deliuer vp, were founde some fragments of a disputation, toching that opinion, affirmd by Marlowe to be his, and shuffled w<sup>th</sup> some of myne (vnknown to me) by some occasion of o<sup>r</sup> wrytinge in one chamber twoe yeares synce.

"My first acquaintance w<sup>th</sup> this Marlowe, rose vpon his bearing name to serve my Lo: although his L<sup>p</sup> never knewe his service, but in writing for his plaiers, ffor never cold my L. endure his name or sight, when he had heard of his conditions, nor wold indeed the forme of devyne praiers vsed duellie in his L<sup>ps</sup> house, have quadred w<sup>th</sup> such reprobates. . . .

"ffor more assurance that I was not of that vile opinion, Lett it but please yo<sup>r</sup> L<sup>p</sup> to enquire of such as he conversd w<sup>th</sup>all, that is (as I am geuen to vnderstand) w<sup>th</sup> *Harriot, Warner, Royden* and some stationers in Paules Churchyard, whom I in no sort can accuse nor will excuse by reson of his companie; of whose consent if I had been, no question but I also should haue been of their consort, for *ex minimo vestigio artifex agnoscit artificem.*"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Harl. MS. 6849, f. 219 b. ; *Kyd's Works*, ed. Boas, cix.

There is one more relevant paper in this case. It has recently been discovered<sup>1</sup> that another unsigned manuscript in the Harleian Collection is in Kyd's handwriting, possibly a sequel to his first letter to Puckering. He mentions some of Marlowe's loose talk in the same strain as the Baines charges, and adds a remark which, if true, is significant as showing that the author of *Edward II.* was now turned "politician" and was intending "to cast the scholler off."

—"he wold p[er]swade w<sup>th</sup> men of quallitie to goe unto the k of *Scotts* whether I heare *Royden* is gon and where if he had liud he told me when I saw him last he meant to be."<sup>2</sup>

Sir Walter Raleigh's name had been freely mentioned in the examinations, and the matter was not allowed to drop. He was watched, even his private conversation being retailed to the Lord Keeper, and in the following year a special commission headed by Lord Thomas Howard was sent down to his home at Cerne in Dorsetshire. Raleigh and his friends were charged with "impious opinions concerning God and provid-

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Ford K. Brown's letter in the *Times* Literary Supplement of 2 June 1921.

<sup>2</sup> Harl. MS. 6848, f. 154.

ence." However, although the commissioners found much that was suspicious of heresy, no further action was taken and Raleigh went travelling until the affair should blow over. Kyd seems to have been released soon after, as nothing could be proved against him.

So died the first two great English dramatists, to the great triumph of the godly, who saw in their fearful ends the manifest signs of divine retribution on naughty play-makers. With the passing of Greene and Marlowe the dominating influence of the University Wits came to an end, and, as if to mark the conclusion of the first era in English drama, so severe an epidemic of plague broke out in the summer of 1593 that the theatres were closed for many months. Nor did Kyd survive these events long; he too was dead by the end of 1594.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHAMBERLAIN'S AND THE ADMIRAL'S

THE year 1593 marks the end of an era with a distinctness unusual in literary history. With the passing of the great writers of the period of Shakespeare's apprenticeship, the influence of their personalities suddenly lapsed. Moreover, as the plague continued all through the autumn, the players' means were so reduced that they were obliged to make practically a new start. It is not, perhaps, surprising that for the next year or two nothing really sensational was produced on the London stages. Shakespeare was now just beginning to emerge as a successful writer, though it must be admitted that until the *Henry IV* plays, written in the autumn of 1597, he produced no dramatic work which surpassed the best of either Greene or Marlowe. Yet this period has a peculiar interest of its own, because the contemporary entries in Henslowe's *Diary*.



give the first really clear indication of theatre conditions.

Philip Henslowe was an early example of the self-made man. On the death of his master—a certain Woodward—in the early 'eighties, Henslowe married the widow and succeeded to the management of the property. He was now in a position to speculate, and one of his many enterprises was the erection—in 1587—of the Rose Theatre on the Bankside. Here, presumably, Edward Alleyn, who was becoming famous as a tragedian, was brought into contact with the Henslowe family, for on 22 October 1592 he married Henslowe's step-daughter, Joan Woodward. Henceforward Alleyn and Henslowe helped each other, and in the end amassed a large fortune, part of which Alleyn used to endow "The College of God's Gift" at Dulwich. Here are preserved a very large collection of letters, accounts, and other documents connected with the various enterprises of the two men. Of these the most important is the famous *Diary*—Henslowe's account book<sup>1</sup> wherein he recorded payments of all sorts by and on behalf of the

<sup>1</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, vol. i. The Text; vol. ii. The Commentary—*Henslowe Papers*, ed. W. W. Greg, 1904-7.

various Companies performing at the Rose and the other theatres which he afterwards owned. The entries cover a period of some eleven years, beginning in 1591.

Two letters from the Dulwich collection, written by Alleyn and his father-in-law in 1593, when, owing to the plague in London, the former went on tour with Strange's, give a vivid picture of their family relationship. The first was sent by Alleyn to his wife and is dated 1 August.

“EMANELL

“My good sweett mouse J comend me hartely to yo<sup>u</sup> And to my father my mother & my sister bess hopinge in god thought the siknes beround about you yett by his mercy itt may escape yo<sup>r</sup> house w<sup>ch</sup> by y<sup>e</sup> grace of god it shall therefor vse this corse kepe yo<sup>r</sup> house fayr and clean w<sup>ch</sup> J knowe you will and every evening throwe water before yo<sup>r</sup> dore and in yo<sup>r</sup> bakeside and haue in yo<sup>r</sup> windowes good store of rwe and herbe of grace and w<sup>t</sup> all the grace of god w<sup>ch</sup> must be obtayned by prayers and so doinge no dout but ye lord will mercyfully defend yo<sup>u</sup>: now good mouse J haue no newse to send you but this thatt we haue all ou<sup>r</sup> helth for w<sup>ch</sup> the lord be praysed J reseved yo<sup>r</sup> letter att bristo by richard couley for the wich J thank you J haue sent yo<sup>u</sup>

by this berer Thomas popes kinsman my whit wascote because it is a trobell to me to cary it reseave it w<sup>t</sup> this letter And lay it vp for me till J com if you send any mor letters send to me by the cariers of shrowsbery or to west chester or to york to be keptt till my Lord stranges players com and thus sweett hartt w<sup>t</sup> my harty comendã to all o<sup>r</sup> frends J sess from bristo this wensday after saint Jams his day being redy to begin the playe of hary of cornwall mouse do my harty comend to m<sup>r</sup> grigshis wif and all his houshold and to my sister phillyps

“Yo<sup>r</sup> Loving housband E Alleyne

“mouse you send me no newes of any things you should send of yo<sup>r</sup> domestycall matters such things as hapens att home as how yo<sup>r</sup> distilled watter proves or this or that or any thing what you will

“and Jug J pray yo<sup>u</sup> Lett my orayng tawny stokins of wolen be dyed a very good blak against J com hom to wear in the winter yo<sup>u</sup> sente me nott word of my garden but next tym you will but remember this in any case that all that bed w<sup>ch</sup> was parsley in the month of september you sowe itt w<sup>t</sup> spinage for then is the tym : J would do it my self but we shall nott com hom till allholand tyd and so swett mouse farwell and broke ou<sup>r</sup> Long Journey w<sup>t</sup> patienc.”

To this letter Henslowe and Joan Alleyne replied :

“ Welbeloved Sonne edward allen After owr hartie Comendationes bothe J & you<sup>r</sup> mother & syster bease all in generall dothe hartieley comende vs vnto you & as for you mowse her comendationes comes by y<sup>t</sup> seallfe w<sup>ch</sup> as she sayes comes from her harte & her sowle prainge to god day daye & nyght for you<sup>r</sup> good heallth w<sup>ch</sup> trewley to be playne we doe soe alle hoopinge in the lorde Jesus that we shall haue agayne a mery meting for J thanke god we haue be flytted w<sup>th</sup> feare of the sycknes but thanks be vnto god we are all this time in good healthe in our howse but Rownd about vs yt hathe bene all moste in every howsse about vs & wholle howsholdes deyed & yt my frend the baylle doth scape but he smealles monstrusly for feare & dares staye no wheare for ther hathe deyed this laste weacke in generall 1603 of the w<sup>ch</sup> nomber ther hathe died of them of the plage 113-0-5 w<sup>ch</sup> hause bene the greatest that came yet & as for other newes of this & that J cane tealle youe none but that Robert brownes wife in shordech & all her chell-dren & howshowld be dead & heare dores sheat vpe & as for you<sup>r</sup> Joyner he hath browght you a corte coberd & hath seat vp you<sup>r</sup> portowle in the chamber & sayes you shall have a good bead

stead & as for your garden yt is weall & your spenege bead not forgotten your orange colerd stockens died but no market in smythfylld nether to bye your cloth not yet to sealle your horsse for no mane wold ofer me a bove fower pownd for hime therfor J wold not sealle hime but haue seante hime in to the contrey tylle youe Retorne backe agayene this licke poore peapell Reioysinge that the lorde hath in compased vs Rownd & kepeth vs all in health we end prayinge to god to seand you all good health that yet maye please god to send that we maye all merelye meat & J praye you do ower comendationes vnto them all & J wold gladley heare the licke frome them & thanks be to god to your poore mowsse hath no ben seack seance you weant.

“Your lovinge wiffe            “Your poore & a sured  
     tylle death Jone allen        frend tell death  
    Phillippe Hensley.”<sup>1</sup>

By the June of 1594 the plague had subsided. Lord Strange's Men acted with the Admiral's for a few days under Henslowe's management in the obscure theatre at Newington Butts. Thence parting company they moved to the old Theatre. Alleyn rejoined the Admiral's at his father-in-law's house the Rose on the Bankside.

<sup>1</sup> *Henslowe Papers*, pp. 35-7.

From this date begins the rivalry between these famous Companies, and as their rather frequent change of designation is confusing, the titles each bore from time to time are here noted chronologically.

*Lord Strange's Company* (to which Shakespeare now belonged).

1588. On the death of the great Earl of Leicester, the best actors of Leicester's and Strange's apparently reorganized into a new "Lord Strange's Company."

1592. Strange's Men acted for a time at the Rose and afterwards travelled under the leadership of Edward Alleyn.

(STRANGE'S.)

1593. (25 Sept.) Lord Strange became Earl of Derby.

(DERBY'S.)

1594. (April 16.) The Earl died. His players now took service under Henry Carey, Lord Chamberlain.

(CHAMBERLAIN'S.)

1596. (July 23.) The Lord Chamberlain died and the players were taken over by his son George Carey, Lord Hunsdon.

(HUNSDON'S.)

1597. (March 17.) Lord George Hunsdon became Lord Chamberlain.

(CHAMBERLAIN'S.)

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"You <sup>r</sup> lovinge wiffe	"You <sup>r</sup> poore & a sured
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(CHAMBERLAIN'S.)



1603. (May 17.) James I became Patron of the Company.

(THE KING'S MEN.)

*The Admiral's.*

1585. Lord Charles Howard becomes Lord High Admiral.

(ADMIRAL'S.)

1596. (October.) Lord Howard was created Earl of Nottingham.

(NOTTINGHAM'S or ADMIRAL'S.)

1603. Prince Henry became Patron of the Company.

(PRINCE HENRY'S or PRINCE OF WALES'S.)

1612. On Prince Henry's death, the Company was taken over by the Palsgrave, or Elector Palatine, who married Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I.

(PALSGRAVE'S.)

The other London Companies are not really of great importance in our story, and soon took a minor place.

Each Company had certain advantages. The Admiral's, who had not played in London for some time, were under the leadership of Alleyn, now at the head of his profession. They started well with an excellent repertory. During the bad years of 1593-4, Henslowe seems to have

bought up the better plays of bankrupt Companies, which he naturally loaned to the players acting at his own theatre. Moreover the Admiral's were the original owners of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*.

Lord Strange's Men were not so fortunate in this respect, but when they opened at the Theatre they were beginning to accumulate. Shakespeare produced *Richard II*, the *Merchant of Venice*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the *Taming of the Shrew* between 1594 and 1597. Unfortunately we know little of the plays of minor dramatists which they brought out.

On the other hand, the Company had certain advantages which more than compensated for any inferiority in programme. James Burbage was always so harassed with debts and lawsuits that he could never have had the same power over the actors as Henslowe. Richard Burbage, his younger son, was now making his name as a tragedian and was especially famous for his performance as Richard III; Will Kemp, their "clown," had no rival, and Shakespeare was already winning recognition as the greatest living dramatist. All these factors tended to unite the Chamberlain's into a company of friends.

Thus both Admiral's and Chamberlain's soon recovered from the effect of the lean years and began to outstrip rival Companies. Naturally they drifted into competition—with the happiest results for English literature. Of methods at the Theatre we know only what can be deduced from Shakespeare's work and life. Fleay expressed the opinion that Shakespeare "had the management of the playwriting for his house pretty nearly in his own hands and that his method was the polar opposite to that of which we know most, viz. Henslowe's. While the latter employed twelve poets in a year, who produced for the Admiral's Men a new play every fortnight or so, the Chamberlain's Company depended almost entirely on two poets at a time, and produced not more than four new plays a year."<sup>1</sup>

This is very doubtful. Thanks to Henslowe's *Diary*, we know the name of every play produced under his management for several years. But without this evidence, the usual sources of information—such as the *Stationers' Register* and odd references—would give a very inaccurate idea of the output at the Rose. That methods

<sup>1</sup> *A Chronicle History of the Life and Work of William Shakespeare*, by F. G. Fleay, 1886, p. 284.

at the Theatre were different is probable ; that they were the "polar opposite," most unlikely. The number of plays acted by the Chamberlain's which were quite wrongly attributed to Shakespeare in his lifetime and afterwards, shows that they too had a large repertory.

The illiterate entries of the *Diary* give a most interesting picture of the methods of Henslowe's literary staff. He chose good writers for the most part—Jonson, Drayton, Chapman, Dekker, Webster all at some time in their careers wrote for him ; and this fact suggests that the pay was good for the time, though he had the money-lender's instinct for keeping men in his clutches. Between 1598 and 1602, some twenty-six poets are mentioned, but of these only a few were in regular employment. Chettle, Dekker and Drayton were the busiest writers, and a glance at some of the entries will show their methods.

Plays were seldom the work of one man, the large majority being written to order by syndicates of two or more. Thus in 1598, Dekker and Drayton—sometimes with outside help—produced between them fourteen plays, to which Dekker added two of his own. In March, the Company borrowed from Henslowe £4, 5s. to

pay "drayton & dyckers & chetell" for "the famos wares of henry the fyrste & the prynce of walles," and another 5s. "for to spend at the Readyng of that boocke at the sonne in new fychstreate." A few days later another £4 appears for "Goodwine and iij sones," with 5s. as before "for good cheare."

Dekker's sixteen plays during this year are about a third of the Admiral's complete programme, the actual figures for the period being 44 in 1598, 30 in '99, 18 in 1600 (a bad year), and 25 in 1601. Playing, in short, if profitable, was certainly an arduous profession. The very frequent change of programme shows that the regular theatre-going audience was small but keen, knowing actors and authors personally and able to appreciate the numerous personalities of dramatic literature.

In the following year Dekker's affairs were not so prosperous. Although he wrote or shared in eleven plays, he was getting into debt, and payments in the *Diary* are mostly noted as advances "in earnest" of unwritten or partly finished work. In January he was in jail for debt, and on the 30th, Thomas Downton, who was treasurer to the Company, had to borrow £3, 10s. to

"descarge Thomas Dickers from the a reaste of my lord chamberlen men" who were at the moment trying to raise every penny they could. In May it was Chettle's turn to be in prison, and Dekker was forced to borrow 20s. to get him out.

One of Dekker's best-known plays, *Old Fortunatus*, was written and produced at the end of this year, and the entries give a very good idea of his rapidity as a writer. On 9 November, which was probably the date when he agreed with the Company to rewrite the old story of Fortunatus and his Wishing Cap, he was paid 40s. "in earnest." On the 24th the play was so far finished that a further £3 was advanced, with a final payment of 30s. on the 30th. In other words, *Fortunatus* was written in three weeks. The next day, however, the Company decided that some parts needed alteration and paid out another 20s. It was staged almost immediately—£10 being loaned for the properties on 6 December. One more entry occurs at this time; the play was thought suitable for the Christmas festivities "for the corte," and Dekker drew another 20s. for a "new eande."

Thomas Dekker was in many ways Greene's

successor amongst professional writers. Between 1598 and 1602 he was constantly in Henslowe's employ; but after 1603 he chiefly wrote pamphlets, carrying on the series of low life sketches in the *Belman of London* (1608), with its sequel *Lanthorne and Candle-light*, and other amusing productions of which the best known is the lively little *Guls Horne Booke* (1609)—a mock guide for the "silly ass about Town."

In July 1597, all the theatres were "restrained" from playing for three months by order of the Privy Council. The trouble arose over the *Isle of Dogs*, written in part by Nashe, which contained "very seditious and slanderous matter." Unfortunately the play has perished, but if it was written in Nashe's usual virulent vein, the annoyance of the authorities was not surprising. A warrant was issued for his arrest, but he managed to slip away to Yarmouth.

On the 27th July 1597 a new name appeared in Henslowe's book:

"R/ of Bengemenes Johnsones  
Share as ffoloweth 1597"

"R/ the 28 of July 1597" . . . iij<sup>s</sup> ix<sup>d</sup>  
and in a different part of the *Diary*:

“lent vnto Benjemen Johnson player  
 the 28 of July 1597 in Redey mony  
 the some of fower powndes to be payd  
 yt agayne when so euer ether J or  
 any for me shall demande yt J  
 saye. . . .

} iiij<sup>u</sup>

witness E Alleyn & John syner”

Later Henslowe notes—

“lent vnto Benjemen Johnstone the  
 3 of desembr 1597 vpon a Bocke w<sup>ch</sup>  
 he was to writte for vs befor crysmas  
 next after the date herof w<sup>ch</sup> he  
 showed the plotte vnto the company  
 J saye lente in Redy money vnto hime  
 the some of . . .<sup>1</sup>

} xx<sup>s</sup>

The same debt is noted under another heading a few pages later. This and some of Jonson's other early plays has not survived, doubtless with good reason, as he had the editing of his own works for the Press in 1616, and saw to it that his hack work should perish, if indeed it was still surviving.<sup>2</sup>

More is known of Ben Jonson than of any of his contemporaries in literature. Apart from the

<sup>1</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, i. 47, i. 200, i. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Meres, however, comments favourably on Jonson's skill as a tragic writer. (*Palladis Tamia*, 1598.)



usual sources of information, there are innumerable references in the work of his admirers—and he was “Father” to most of the poets of the next generation—and, above all, we get a report of his own words in the curious notes of his conversations with the Scotch Poet, Drummond of Hawthornden, whom he visited in the winter of 1618-19. The original manuscript seems to have disappeared long ago, but was fortunately copied early in the eighteenth century.

These notes are grouped into nineteen sections, and give Jonson's opinions on various matters. The longest section (xiii.) is an account

“of his owne lyfe, education, birth, actions

“His Grandfather came from Carlisle & he thought from Anandale to it, he served King Henry 8 & was a Gentleman his father Losed all his estate under Queen Marie, having been cast in prisson and forfaitted, at last turn'd Minister

“So he was a Ministers son, he himself Posthumous born a moneth after his fathers decease, brought up poorly, putt to school by a friend (his master Cambden) after taken from it, and putt to ane other Craft (I think was to be a Wright or Bricklayer) which he could not endure, then went he to ye low Countries. but returning soone he betook himself to his wonted Studies.

In his Service in the Low Countries, he had in the face of both the Campes Killed ane Enimie & taken opima spolia from him, and since his comming to England being appealed to the fields he had Killed his adversarie, which had hurt him in the arme & whose sword was 10 Inches Longer than his, for the which he was Emprisoned and almost at the Gallowes. then took he his Religion by trust of a priest who Visited him in Prisson. therafter he was 12 yeares a Papist.

"He was Master of Arts in both ye Universities by y<sup>r</sup> favour not his studie.

"he married a wyfe who was a shrew yet honest, 5 yeers he had not bedded wt her but remained wt my Lord Aulbanie.

"in the tyme of his close imprissonment under Queen Elisabeth his judges could gett nothing of him to all y<sup>r</sup> demands bot I and No they placed two damn'd Villans to catch advantage of him, wt him, but he was advertised by his Keeper, of the Spies he hath ane Epigrame.

"When the King came in England, at that tyme the pest was in London, he being in the Country at S<sup>r</sup> Robert Cottons house with old Cambden, he saw in a vision his eldest sone y<sup>n</sup> a child and at London, appear unto him w<sup>t</sup> ye Mark of a bloodie crosse on his forehead as if it had been cutted w<sup>t</sup> a suord, at which amazed he prayed unto God,

& in ye morning he came to Mr Cambdens chamber to tell him, who persuaded him it was but ane apprehension of his fantasie at which he sould not be disiected in ye mean tyme comes yr letters from his wife of ye death of yt Boy in ye plague. he appeared to him he said of a manlie shape & of yt Grouth that he thinks he shall be at the resurrection.

"he was delated by Sr Iames Murray to the King for writting something against the Scots in a play Eastward hoe & voluntarily Imprissonned himself wt Chapman and Marston, who had written it amongst ym. the report was that they should then had their ears cutt & noses. after yr delivery he banqueted all his friends, yr was Camben Selden and others. at the midst of the Feast his old mother Dranke to him & shew him a paper which she had (if the Sentence had taken execution) to have mixed in ye Prisson among his drinke, which was full of Lustie strong poison & that she was no churle she told she minded first to have Drunk of it herself.

"he had many quarrells with Marston beat him & took his Pistol from him, wrote his Poetaster on him the beginning of ym were that Marston represented him in the stage in his youth given to Venerie. . . .

"S. W. Raulighe sent him Governour wt his son anno 1613 to France. this Youth being

knavishly inclyned, . . . caused him to be Drunken & dead drunk, so that he knew not wher he was, therafter laid him on a Carr which he made to be Drawen by Pioners through the streets, at every corner shewing his Governour streetched out & telling them that was a more lively image of ye Crucifix then any they had, at which Sporte young Raughlies mother delyghted much (saying his father young was so inclyned) though the father abhorred it.

"He can get Horoscopes, but trusts not in ym, he with ye consent of a friend Cousened a lady, with whom he had made ane apointment to meet ane old Astrologer in the suburbs, which she Keeped & it was himself disguysed in a Longe Gowne & a whyte beard at the light of Dimm burning Candle up in a litle Cabinet reached unto by a Ledder.

"every first day of the new year he had 20 lb. sent him from the Earle of Pembrok to buy bookes.

"after he was reconciled with the Church & left of to be a recusant at his first communion in token of true Reconciliation, he drank out all the full cup of wyne, being at ye end of my Lord Salisburies table with Inigo Iones & demanded by my Lord, why he was not glad My Lord said he you promised I should dine with you, bot I doe not, for he had none of his meate, he estemed only yt his meate which was of his dish.

"he heth consumed a whole night in lying looking to his great toe, about which he hath seen tartars & turks Romans and Carthaginians feight in his imagination.

"Northampton was his mortall enemy for brailing on a St Georges Day one of his attenders, he was called befor ye Councel for his Sejanus & accused both of popperie & treason by him.

"Sundry tymes he heth devoured his bookes. i. sold ym all for Necessity.

"he heth a minde to be a churchman, & so he might have favour to make one sermon to the King, he careth not what yr after sould befall him, for he would not flatter though he saw Death.

"at his hither comming Sr Francis Bacon said to him, he loved not to see poesy goe on other feet yn poetical dactilus & spondaius." <sup>1</sup>

So far as it goes, this is a true outline of Jonson's life, but there are several events which he was not pleased to remember. The entries quoted from Henslowe, for instance, show that between his service in the Lowlands and the success of *Every Man in his Humour*, 1598, he had tried acting with poor success.

In December 1597, he showed the Admiral's

<sup>1</sup> *Ben Jonson: Discoveries and Conversations*, ed. G. B. H., Bodley Head Quartos, p. 11.

Company a plot and promised to finish it by Christmas, being advanced 20s. for it; this play seems never to have been completed, as Chapman was paid £3 in the following October for "ij ectes of a tragedie of bengemens plotte." Eight months later he shared with Chettle and Porter in writing *Hot Anger Soon Cold*, for which they were paid on 8 August 1598.

About this time, however, he sold his first great play, *Every Man in his Humour*, to the Chamberlain's. Tobie Matthew, writing a gossip letter<sup>1</sup> to his friend Dudley Carleton, mentions that a certain foreigner "lost 300 crowns at a new play called Every Man's Humour." Matthew's letter is dated 20 September, so that Jonson had possibly sold the play to the rival Company whilst still drawing pay from Henslowe. Now as he was a slow writer and *Every Man in his Humour* presumably took him some time to write, it may reasonably be assumed that he was busy with it during the spring and summer. There is no reason known for his change of employer, though several suggest themselves. Perhaps he quarrelled with the Admiral's; perhaps they declined the play. Anyhow, the Chamberlain's certainly

<sup>1</sup> *Gal. State Papers Domestic, Eliz.*, 1598-1601, p. 97.

brought it out at the Curtain, where it was the success of the season.

The Admiral's were not unnaturally annoyed, and the upshot was a quarrel between Jonson and Gabriel Spencer, one of Henslowe's best actors. Two years before Spencer had also slain his man, not "in the sight of both the campes," but in a barber's shop. This time he misjudged his adversary's skill and was slain in fair fight, for which Jonson was duly arraigned, but, pleading benefit of clergy, was let off with the loss of his goods—not a great misfortune. The official account of this trial is one-sided, but there seems no doubt that Jonson came out of the business honourably.

The translation of the indictment reads :

" . . . Benjamin Johnson, late of London, yeoman . . . made an attack against and upon a certain Gabriel Spencer, being in God's and the said Lady the Queen's peace at Shordiche in the aforesaid county of Middlesex, in the Fields there, and with a certain sword of iron and steel called a Rapiour, of the price of three shillings, which he then and there had and held drawn in his right hand, feloniously and wilfully beat and struck the same Gabriel, giving then and there to the same

Gabriel Spencer with the aforesaid sword a mortal wound of the depth of six inches and of the breadth of one inch, in and upon the right side of the same Gabriel, of which mortal blow the same Gabriel Spencer at Shorediche aforesaid, in the aforesaid county, in the aforesaid fields, then and there died instantly. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Henslowe thus suffered a double loss. Jonson, now suddenly become famous, was in the service of his rivals; Spencer, one of his best actors, was dead. Edward Alleyn was away in the country at the time, and to him he sorrowfully writes: <sup>2</sup> “now to leat you vnderstand newes J will teall you some but yt is for me harde & heavey sence you weare w<sup>th</sup> me J haue loste one of my company w<sup>ch</sup> hurteth me greatly that is gabrell for he is slayen in hogesden fylldes by the hands of beng[men] Jonson bricklayer therefore J wold fayne haue alittell of your cownsell y<sup>f</sup> J cowlde.” The letter is dated 28 September—six days after the affair.

The Admiral's loss was their rivals' gain. Thereafter the competition increased and became more bitter. Three successful years at the

<sup>1</sup> Translated in F. G. Fleay's *Chronicle of the English Drama*, i. 343.

<sup>2</sup> *Henslowe Papers*, p. 48.



Theatre had followed the doubtful start of 1594. We can trace this prosperity in the business affairs of Shakespeare. By the autumn of 1596 he had applied in his father's name for a coat of arms—though the matter was not settled for another three years. Six months later he bought New Place at Stratford ; and was now considered so prosperous by the Stratford Town Council that they requested him to speak a word for them at London to help them out of their financial difficulties. The best proof of his worldly prosperity lies in a letter (25 October 1598) from a Stratford friend—Richard Quinney—asking for a loan of £30 !

With adequate capital and influential backing, the Chamberlain's Men were now in a position to face the opposition which came in the next years from many quarters. Their first troubles were with their landlord, a certain Giles Alleyn (see p. 9), no relation to the actor.

This Alleyn had originally let out the land on which the Theatre stood to James Burbage for a period of twenty-one years. It had been agreed at the time that Burbage was to have the option of renewing the lease or removing the buildings at the end of his time ; otherwise they would be

forfeited to Alleyn. Alleyn, who had now turned Puritan, saw that with a little manipulation he could oust his tenants and keep their theatre. Accordingly as the time drew near, he kept putting off the renewal of the lease by fair promises, and the due date—April 1597—actually passed with nothing agreed on either side. Matters were further complicated by the death of James Burbage on 2 February 1597. Fortunately, however, in the next year after the Theatre had been built another speculator had set up a rival house within a stone's throw—the Curtain. Thither the Chamberlain's Men moved until matters should be settled, the Theatre meanwhile being left empty.

This state of affairs actually lasted for close on eighteen months, until, in September 1598, Cuthbert Burbage, who had succeeded to the Theatre property, made a further appeal to Alleyn to renew the lease as he had promised. Alleyn proposed some new and quite impossible conditions of tenancy which were naturally refused, as he had doubtless intended they should be. The Burbages now realized that they were likely to be cheated out of the valuable building materials of their theatre. They therefore acted quickly and

boldly. They called together their friends to agree on the next move. So far as the Theatre was concerned they obviously had to seek a new home; and for many reasons it was desirable to look for a different locality altogether. There had been much unpleasantness in the Shore-ditch neighbourhood, and more than one brawl.<sup>1</sup> Besides, the Bankside was now becoming more and more the recognized locality for amusements of all sorts.

A good site was soon found in Southwark, not far from Henslowe's Rose, and there it was resolved to build a new theatre which should be more magnificent than any in the kingdom. At this point the advantages of the Chamberlain's financial arrangements showed themselves. Such a speculation was obviously beyond the means of any but a capitalist; but all the chief members of the Company were by this time reasonably well off. It was agreed, therefore, that the Burbages should pay half the cost of the new venture and that the other half should be shared between Shakespeare, Hemings, Philips, Pope and Kemp—the principal members of the Company. In

<sup>1</sup> The full and amusing story of the history of the Theatre is to be found in J. Q. Adams's *Shakespearean Playhouses*, 1921.

other words, Cuthbert and Richard Burbage each held two and a half shares and the others one apiece. At the same time another arrangement was made by which these shares were kept inside the Company and not allowed to pass to an outsider.

The partnership applied only to the owners of the property—the “house-keepers” as they were called—who drew their incomes, as was the usual custom in London playhouses, from the takings of the galleries, whilst the actors shared the entrance and pit monies. But as the house-keepers were also actors they naturally held two shares. This arrangement was of the greatest importance, because it meant that it was to every one’s advantage to do his utmost for the common good, and, as the system worked out admirably in practice, the partners became firm and life-long friends—a true “fellowship of players.”

These details being agreed upon, it remained for the Company to save their property. While Alleyn was away in the country his tenants moved skilfully. On 25 December the lease for the new site on the Bankside was signed. On the 28th the two Burbages, William Smith of Waltham Cross—a friend, Peter Streete—“chief carpenter,”

and a dozen workmen proceeded to Shoreditch and forthwith began to tear down the Theatre. Alleyn's tenants tried to interfere, but as Burbage's party was armed with swords, the work was not interrupted. Thereupon the timber was piled on carts, carried over the Thames, and dumped on the site of the new playhouse, where, one may guess, Alleyn did not follow it.

It is not surprising that Alleyn was doubly annoyed at finding that he had been so badly out-manceuvred. He immediately began a lawsuit, but his charges were so reckless that the suit was finally dismissed after dragging on for over two years. However, he deserves the gratitude of posterity for preserving in this way the details of the foundation of the first Globe Theatre.

Almost seven months later the new Globe Theatre, the "glory of the Bank," was opened. The Chamberlain's had by this time collected a splendid repertory, their latest plays including Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* and *Every Man out of his Humour*, Shakespeare's *Falstaffe* plays and the new *Henry V*.

The first part of *Henry IV* had been brought out at the Curtain in 1597—probably the

autumn—where the fat knight first figured as Sir John Oldcastle. This was unfortunate; the original Oldcastle was a martyr under Henry v for his Lollard principles, and his descendant, Lord Cobham, rather naturally objected that his ancestor should appear so disreputably on the common stage. He protested; the name was thereupon altered to *Falstaffe*, and an apology made in the Epilogue to the second part of the play. Possibly for this reason *Henry IV* (Part 1) was published soon after—contrary to the Company's custom—being licensed on 25 February 1598, as “The historye of Henry iiijth with his battaile of Shrewsburye against Henry Hotspurre of the North with the conceived mirthe of Sir John Falstaffe.” The second part must have followed very soon after the first: most critics assign it to the spring or even summer of 1598, but as the earliest quarto (1600), in one place (1. ii. 144) prints “*Old*” in mistake for “*Fals*” before one of Falstaffe's speeches, we may assume that Shakespeare wrote the second part before Lord Cobham's protest caused him to change the “Oldcastle” into “Falstaffe.”

As it was the custom at the Rose to act two-part plays on successive days, it is probable that

*Henry IV* (Parts I and II) and *Henry V* were performed as a trilogy.

The competition between the Chamberlain's and the Admiral's had been growing acute even whilst the former were as far away as Shoreditch, but when the new Globe began to top the Rose, Henslowe and Alleyn must have felt distinctly uneasy. The situation was getting desperate in the summer of 1599 as the crowds passed to and fro from their rivals' house. It was clear that to build another playhouse was the only real solution. Meanwhile some counter-attraction had to be found. Accordingly, within a couple of months of the opening of the Globe, we find the following entries :

" this 16 of October 99

"Receved by me Thomas downton of phillipp Henschlow to pay m <sup>r</sup> monday m <sup>r</sup> drayton & m <sup>r</sup> wilsson & haythway for the first pte of the lyfe of S <sup>r</sup> Jhon Ouldcasstell & in earnest of the second pte for the vse of the company ten pownd J saye receved. . . ." <sup>1</sup>	}	1011
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The play was hurried on and successfully brought

<sup>1</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, i. 113.

out. Henslowe was delighted, and showed his appreciation by a rare mark of favour.

(1st Nov.)

“Receved of Mr Hincheloe for Mr  
Mundaye & the Reste of the poets at  
the playnge of Sr John oldcastell the }<sup>xs</sup>  
ferste tyme.

which he is careful to note in the margin “as a geftē.”

The second part is not now extant. The first was licensed on 1 August 1600 and published during the year with the title of “The first part of the true and honourable history, of the life of Sir John Old-castle, the good Lord Cobham.” Admittedly it was intended to disparage Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* by reviving the old ill-feeling, as the Prologue rather self-righteously asserts :

“The doubtfull title (Gentlemen) prefix  
Upon the Argument we haue in hand,  
May breede suspence and wrongfully disturbe  
The peacefull quiet of your setled thoughts.  
To stop which scruple, let this brieft suffice :  
It is no pamperd glutton we present,  
Nor aged Councillor to youthfull sinne,  
But one, whose vertue shone aboue the rest,  
A valiant Martyr, and a Vertuous peere ;



In whose true faith and loyalty exprest  
Vnto his soueraigne, and his countries weale,  
We strue to pay that tribute of our Loue,  
Your fauours merite. Let faire Truth be grac'te  
Since forg'de inuention former time defac'te." <sup>1</sup>

It took Henslowe and Alleyn six months to make up their minds to move. Then in December 1599 Alleyn found a suitable piece of ground on the opposite side of the river in the parish of St. Giles without Cripplegate where, after many delays and vexatious checks, the Fortune Theatre was ultimately finished late in 1600.

About this time all theatres were apparently threatened with extinction. The last ten years had seen several changes. The dangers of a Spanish invasion and a renewal of the anarchy of the previous century which had united all but a few irreconcilables, had now passed away, and it was soon evident that the real difference between Churchmen and Puritans was much deeper than a distinction of creed. On the one side were all those less desirable gallants who found a convenient faith in the laxer control of the Church over men's morals; on the other, the self-made merchant and tradesman, caring little

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare Apocrypha*, p. 129.

for the past, found that the new, sterner code brought them increased prosperity. Catholic England had enjoyed many holy days, and it is not surprising that the employer of labour should have been well satisfied that by his increased godliness he kept the workmen busier, and simultaneously suppressed the superstitious relics of Rome,<sup>1</sup> as the popular amusements were considered.

In London this change of attitude is shown in an increasing friction between the Privy Council and the Aldermen. In 1600 another determined effort was made to put down the theatres for good and all. On several previous occasions the Privy Council had, on the whole, supported the players, but in the summer of this year the

<sup>1</sup> "Our holie and festiuall daies are verie well reduced also vnto a lesse number; for whereas (not long since) we had vnder the pope foure score and fifteene, called festiuall, and thirtie *Profesti*, besides the sundaies, they are all brought vnto seauen and twentie; and with them the superfluous number of idle waks, guilds, fraternities, church-ales, helpe-ales, and soule-ales, called also dirge-ales, with the heathnish rioting at bride-ales, are well diminished and laid aside. And no great matter were it if the feasts of all our apostles, euangelists, and martyrs, with that of all saints, were brought to the holie daies that follow Christmase, Easter, and Whitsuntide; and those of the virgine Marie, with the rest vtterlie remooued from the Calendars, as neither necessarie nor commendable in a reformed church."—Harrison's "Description of England" in Holinshed's *Chronicle*, 1585, II. i.

agitation was renewed and the Privy Council issued a lengthy order "for the restraunte of the immoderate use and Companye of Playhouses and Players." It was pointed out that

"the multitude of the saide houses and mys-government of them hath bin and is dayly occasion of the ydle, ryotous and dissolute living of great numbers of people, that, leavinge all such honest and painefull course of life as they should followe, doe meet and assemble there, and of many particular abuses and disorders that doe thereupon ensue; and yet, nevertheles, it is considered that the use and exercise of such playes, not beinge evill in ytself, may with a good order and moderation be suffered in a well-governed state, and that her Maiestie, beinge pleased at somtymes to take delight and recreation in the sight and hearinge of them, some order is fitt to be taken for the allowance and mayntenaunce of such persons as are thought meetest in that kinde to yealde her Maiestie recreation and delighte, and consequently of the houses that must serve for publike playinge to keepe them in exercise. To the ende, therefore, that both the greate abuses of the playes and playingehouses may be redressed, and yet the aforesaide use and moderation of them retayned, the Lordes and the reste of her Maiesties Privie

Counsell, with one and full consent, have ordered . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Firstly that only the Fortune, then in building, and the Globe were to be allowed.

“Secondly,—forasmuch as these stage-plaies, by the multitude of houses and company of players, have bin so frequent, not servinge for recreation but invitinge and callinge the people dayly from their trade and worke to myspend their tyme, it is likewise ordered that the two severall companies of players assigned unto the two houses allowed may play each of them in their severall houses twice a weeke and no oftener, and especially that they shall refrayne to play on the Sabbath-day upon paine of imprysonment and further penaltie; and they shall forbear altogether in the tyme of Lent, and likewise at such tyme and tymes as any extraordinary sicknes or infection of disease shall appear to be in or about the cittie.”

To this repressive document a very 'naïve thirdly was appended :

“Because these orders will be of little force and effecte unlesse they be duely putt into execution by those unto whome it appertayneth to see

<sup>1</sup> J. O. Halliwell Phillip's *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, i. 307.

them executed, it is duely ordered that severall copies of these orders shal be sent to the Lord Mayor of London and to the Justices of the Peace of the counties of Middlesex and Surrey."

A copy of the letter is preserved; it authorizes the Lord Mayor and the Justices to take any necessary steps, and adds:

"but as wee have done our partes in prescribinge the orders, so, unlesse yow perfourme yours in lookinge to the due execution of them, we shall loose our labor, and the wante of redresse must be imputed unto yow and other unto whome it apperteyneth; and therfore, wee doe hereby authorize and require you to see the saide orders to be putt in execution and to be continued, as yow do wish the amendement of the aforesaide abuses and will remove the blame thereof from yourselves." <sup>1</sup>

The whole affair is rather curious. The tone of the Council's letter is sarcastic, and suggests that they expected that their letter would be disregarded, as indeed it was.

The probable truth of the matter is that the Privy Council never intended anything to be stopped except the mouth of the Lord Mayor.

<sup>1</sup> J. O. Halliwell Phillip's *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, i. 308.

They were fully aware that the Justices of the Peace would be unable to suppress the favourite servants of the great lords who sheltered the London Companies. Not only so, but these same Lords were the most prominent members of the Privy Council. Their real attitude can be well seen by their action in the matter of the Fortune a few months before.

The proposal to build a theatre in Finsbury had provoked the usual opposition, with the result that Alleyn appealed to his patron the Earl of Nottingham, Lord High Admiral, who gave him a general licence.

“ Weareas my Servant Edward Allen<sup>r</sup> in respect of the dangerous decaye of that Howse w<sup>ch</sup> he and his Companye haue nowe, on the Banck, (And for that the same standeth verie noysome for resorte of people in the wynter tyme) Hath thearfore nowe of late, taken a plott of grounde neere Redcrossestreete london. (verie fitt and convenient) for the buildinge, of a new Howse theare, and hath provided Tymber and other nescessaries for theeffectinge thearof<sup>r</sup> to his greate chardge: fforasmuche as the place standeth verie convenient, for the ease of People, And that her Mat<sup>tie</sup> (in respect<sup>r</sup> of the acceptable Service, w<sup>ch</sup> my saide Servant and his Companie<sup>r</sup>

haue doen and presented before her Highenes to her greate likeinge and Contentm<sup>t</sup>; aswell this last Christmas as att sondrie other tymes) ys graciouslie moued towards them w<sup>th</sup> a speciall regarde of fauor in their proceedinges: Theis shalbe thearefore to praie and requier yo<sup>u</sup> and everie of yo<sup>u</sup>. To permitt and suffer my saide Servant to proceede in theeffectinge and finishinge of the saide New howse, w<sup>th</sup>out anie yo<sup>r</sup> lett or molestation towarde him or any of his workmen. And soe not doubtinge of yo<sup>r</sup> observacōn in this behalf. J bidd yo<sup>u</sup> right hartelie farewell att the Courte at Richmond the xij<sup>th</sup> of Januarye 1599 [1600]

Notingham.

To all & euery her ma<sup>ty</sup>s Justices & other Ministers and Officers w<sup>th</sup>in the Countye of Midds & to euery of them And to all others whome it shall Concerne:”<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks later the opposition had faded away, and a petition from the inhabitants of Finsbury was presented to the Privy Council, begging that the building might continue. Whereupon a letter was written

“To ye Justices of Peace of y<sup>e</sup> Countye of Midds especially of St. Gyles w<sup>th</sup>out Creple-

<sup>1</sup> *Henslowe Papers*, 49-50.

gate. And to all others whome it shall Concerne" requiring them "To Tollerate the proceedinge of the saide New howse neere Goulding Lane. And doe heerbye requier you and everie of you. To permitt and suffer the said Edward Allen to proceede in theeffectinge and finishinge of the same Newe howse, w<sup>th</sup>out anie yo<sup>r</sup> lett or interrupcōn, towarde him, or anye of his woorkmen. the rather because an other howse is pulled downe, in steade of yt."

This letter is signed—in their official capacity—by the Earl of Nottingham, patron of the Admiral's, Lord George Hunsdon, patron of the Chamberlain's, and Sir Robert Cecil; it shows that these noblemen quite openly used their official position to further the interests of their servants.

When, in answer to the complaints of the City, the Privy Council issued the order to suppress the theatres, the individual members presumably informed their players in private that no harm was really meant—certainly no action was taken.

Great nobles had no hesitation in disregarding such orders, as a letter written by the Duke of Lennox on behalf of his players will show :

"S<sup>r</sup> J am given to vnderstand that you haue forbidden the Companye of Players (that call



themselues myne) the exercise of their Playes ; J praie yo<sup>u</sup> to forbear any such course against them, and seeing they haue my License, to suffer them to continue the vse of their Playes ; and vntill you receaue other significacōn from me of them, to afforde them yo<sup>r</sup> favoure and assistance. And so J bidd yo<sup>u</sup> hartely farewell. ffrom Hampton Courte the xiiij<sup>th</sup> of October. 1604.

"Yo<sup>r</sup> loving freende

"LENOX.

"To all maiors Justeses of peas Shreefes Balifes Constabells and all other his highnes officers and lofing subiects to whome it shall or may in any wise appertaīe." <sup>1</sup>

Six months later the Chamberlain's were again in trouble through implication in the Essex rebellion.

The Earl of Essex had returned from Ireland in the autumn of 1600, but he was in disgrace and not allowed to enter the Court. Being thus politically and socially ruined, he was led on in February 1601 to make his desperate and futile "rebellion."

He had collected a number of his friends and dependents, including Shakespeare's former patron the Earl of Southampton, at his house in Queen-

<sup>1</sup> *Henslowe Papers*, p. 62.

hithe. Here they brooded over their troubles and were beginning to consider means of redressing their wrongs. On Thursday, the 5 of February, some of Essex's followers approached Philips, one of the Globe actors, with the request that the players should act the play of *Richard II.* Philip's account of what passed at the interview—as recorded in the evidence taken before Essex's trial—is as follows :

"he sayeth that on Fryday last was sennyght, or Thursday, Sir Charles Percy, Sir Jostlyne Percy, and the L. Monthege, with some thre more, spake to some of the players, in the presense of thys examinant, to have the playe of the deposyng and kylling of Kyng Rychard the Second to be played the Saterdag next, promysyng to geve them XLs more then their ordynary to play yt ; when thys examinant and hys fellowes were determyned to have played some other play, holdyng that play of Kyng Rychard to be so old, and so long out of yous, that they should have small or no cumpany at yt ; but, at theire request, this examinant and his fellowes were content to play yt the Saterdag, and have theise XLs more then theire ordynary for yt, and so played yt accordyngly." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines*, ii, 360-1.

The play was duly performed upon Saturday, the 7 of February, and Sir Gelly Merryke, one of the conspirators, deposed :

“ . . . after dynner that day, and at the motyon of Sir Charles Percy and rest, they all went together to the Globe, over the water, wher the L. Chamberlen's men use to playe, and were ther sumwhat before the playe began, Sir Charles tellyng them that the playe wold be of Harry the iiiij.th ; . . . ”

Neither Essex nor Southampton were present at this performance. The connection between Richard II and Queen Elizabeth is fairly obvious ; as the Queen was peculiarly “ touchy ” on the subject of deposition, and less than two years before had secured the imprisonment of the author of a work on Henry IV relating the deposition. Essex's friends probably caused this play to be staged in order that they might reconnoitre popular feeling on the likelihood of history repeating itself.

However, matters were brought to a head on the very next day (8 February). A deputation of Privy Councillors demanded that Essex should forthwith dismiss his Company and appear at Court. The Earl appears to have lost his head ;

he led his followers out and marched on the City with the idea of rushing Whitehall Palace. But the alarm was given ; he was proclaimed a traitor in the City ; vigorously opposed at Ludgate ; and, after some fighting in the streets, compelled to hasten back across the river to his house, where finally he surrendered to the Lord Admiral.

Essex had made many enemies by his haughty behaviour, and could expect no mercy from those whom he had intended to ruin. The trial was hurried on, and both Earls were condemned to death. Southampton's sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life : Essex was beheaded on the 25th February.

It is very doubtful whether the players were really implicated in the conspiracy at all. In the light of after events, they certainly acted foolishly, and doubtless they sympathized, as indeed nearly every one else did, with the unfortunate Earl. But their attitude (if they ventured to express feelings on such dangerous matters) is more likely to have been that of their patron Lord Hunsdon, who took an active part in hunting down the conspirators.

At any rate, they were completely exonerated from blame and played at Court on the night

before Essex was executed. Shakespeare's opinion may perhaps be shown in a remark interpolated in one of Hero's speeches in *Much Ado* :

“ And bid her steal into the pleached bower,  
Where honey-suckles ripened by the sun,  
Forbid the sun to enter : like favourites,  
Made proud by Princes, that advance their pride,  
Against the power that bred it. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile other events caused the competition between the Chamberlain's and Admiral's to be temporarily abandoned. About this time broke out “ the terrible war of the poets ” which was begun by Ben Jonson and ended in his defeat at the hands of Dekker. The ramifications and side issues of this really important event in literary history are so complicated that only an outline can be attempted here. Like most Elizabethan drama, it had its commercial as well as its literary side.

Shortly before his death in February 1597, when he saw that affairs at the Theatre were not likely to prosper, James Burbage had started another speculation.<sup>2</sup> He acquired certain property in the aristocratic quarter of Blackfriars,

<sup>1</sup> III. i. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses*, p. 202.

which he converted into a theatre where plays might be performed indoors by artificial light. But, as the residents naturally objected to the inconveniences arising out of a theatre in their midst, Burbage was forbidden to use the buildings as a "public" playhouse, but was permitted to let it out for use as a private theatre.<sup>1</sup> On the death of James Burbage, the Blackfriars property passed to his second son Richard. During the next few years its history is somewhat uncertain, but it seems to have been occupied intermittently by a troupe of boy actors under a certain Henry Evans, who had been similarly employed some years before. He interested in his undertakings the Master of the Chapel, Nathaniel Giles, who held commission to "take up" boys for the Choir of the Royal Chapel. The "children" were expected not only to sing in Chapel but also to provide entertainment for the Queen when called upon. Evans saw in this arrangement a splendid opening. The children obviously had to rehearse for these performances; Blackfriars was admirably suited for the purpose; what objection could there be to the admission

<sup>1</sup> There was an earlier private theatre in the same buildings from 1576 to 1584.

(on payment) of a few friends to watch these "rehearsals" ?

The scheme prospered. Other boy actors were added to the choristers and soon the Blackfriars Company was in full swing. As the children did not expect to be paid large salaries, Evans and Giles were able to stage their productions in such a way that they effectively rivalled the public theatres. Evans leased the Blackfriars Theatre from Burbage on 2 September 1600, and proved so dangerous a rival to the Globe that Shakespeare in the well-known passage in *Hamlet* was moved to make one of his few personal references to stage events.<sup>1</sup> The prosperity of these boy actors was undoubtedly due, to a large extent, to the quarrels between the dramatists, which must now be considered.

<sup>1</sup> *Hamlet*, II. ii. 356.

## CHAPTER IV

### POETOMACHIA

THE Children at Blackfriars were not without rivals, as an equally successful Company on similar lines had been formed at Whitefriars from the choir boys of St. Paul's. Various circumstances helped both. The situation of their respective houses was more convenient for the fashionable man, who soon learnt to prefer the privacy and "tone" of the private theatre which was closed to the "noisy rabblement."

The "gentleman author," as has been shown, seldom wrote for the public stage without a feeling of shame. Michael Drayton, for example, who in his boyhood had been brought up in the household of Sir Henry Goodere, wrote several plays, but never published one in his own name, though his other works are all acknowledged. There could, however, be no disgrace in writing for the cultured and discriminating audiences which patronized Blackfriars and Whitefriars.



Accordingly we find that most of the dramatists who supplied the Children with plays were gentlemen, and, as time went on, several poets who were socially better connected or had influential patrons left the public stages to write for the Children. From the writer's point of view, too, it was a much more satisfactory arrangement. At the Rose, Henslowe's actors regarded the playwright merely as one of the tradesmen who supplied the theatre—little superior to the "sylckman," tailor, or the "copper lace man." But at Blackfriars the boy actors were in a subordinate position; the poet was more important than the actor. In a few years the success of the private theatres actually led to great changes in the status of both actor and dramatist.

Among those gentlemen who took advantage of the new conditions to add to their incomes by dramatic writing was John Marston, son of a gentleman of the Inner Temple. He had been educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, and had settled down in London in the unsatisfactory position of a hanger-on at Court. In 1598 he published a book of Satires called the *Scourge of Villany*. Then he turned playwright and wrote for the Children at Whitefriars.

Marston's style is "tumid"; he uses incredibly obscure and far-fetched terms, and thus he offended Jonson's literary sense. He offended still more when he ventured to comment (albeit not unfavourably) on Jonson's art.

Now Ben Jonson had a wonderfully fine opinion of his own powers and undisguised contempt for the wit of most of his contemporaries, though his performance hitherto had not shown him to be in the front rank of dramatists. But in the summer of 1598, Jonson, who was now tiring of the Admiral's, presented himself at the Curtain and offered *Every Man in his Humour* to the Chamberlain's Men—"and the persons into whose hands it was put after having turned it carelessly and superciliously over, were just upon returning it to him with an ill-natured answer that it would be of no service to their Company, when Shakespeare luckily cast his eye upon it, and found something so well in it as to engage him first to read it through and afterwards to recommend Mr. Jonson and his writings to the public."<sup>1</sup> Jonson's head was probably turned by the success of his play. For some time he had held "views" on the subject of dramatic

<sup>1</sup> Rowe, *Life of Shakespeare*.

propriety, and he now considered himself in a position to declare them publicly. Even in *Every Man in his Humour*, he has a cut at his contemporaries when he introduces a Prologue to display the novelty of his comedy by denouncing the usual stage methods :

“ Though need make many poets, and some such  
 As art and nature have not better'd much ;  
 Yet ours for want hath not so loved the stage,  
 As he dare serve the ill customs of the age,  
 Or purchase your delight at such a rate,  
 As, for it, he himself must justly hate :  
 To make a child now swaddled, to proceed  
 Man, and then shoot up in one beard and weed,  
 Past threescore years ; or, with three rusty swords  
 And help of some few foot or half-foot words,  
 Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars,  
 And in the tiring-house bring wounds to scars. . . .  
 But deeds, and language, such as men do use,  
 And persons, such as comedy would choose,  
 When she would show an image of the times,  
 And sport with human follies, not with crimes,  
 Except we make them such, by loving still  
 Our popular errors, when we know they're ill.  
 I mean such errors as you 'll all confess,  
 By laughing at them, they deserve no less :  
 Which when you heartily do, there's hope left then,  
 You, that have so grac'd monsters, may like men.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gifford's *Jonson*, ed. J. Cunningham, i. 3. It should be noted, however, that this Prologue is not in the first quarto (see *Every Man in his Humour*, ed. P. Simpson, Oxford, 1919).

At first sight, it may seem strange that the references to "three rusty swords" and "York and Lancaster's long jars"—all obvious criticisms of Shakespeare's historical plays—should have been passed, but actually we may suspect that neither the Chamberlain's nor any one else took Ben very seriously at this time, and in any case a little bickering is always "good for the house."

Some months later (1599), Jonson followed up his first success at the Curtain by writing *Every Man out of his Humour*, which was also produced by the Chamberlain's at their new house the Globe. He now felt so sure of himself that he began to criticize pretty freely. The new comedy is prefaced by an Induction in which Asper, Cordatus, and Mitis discuss the author, his methods and his theories. In the folio of his own plays which Jonson afterwards published, he describes Asper as "of an ingenious and free spirit, eager, and constant in reproof, without fear controlling the world's abuses. One whom no servile hope of gain, or frosty apprehension of danger, can make to be a parasite, either in time, place, or opinion."<sup>1</sup> He will

<sup>1</sup> Gifford's *Jonson*, i. 62.

have no half-measures ; when Mitis suggests that

“ The days are dangerous, full of exception,  
And men are grown impatient of reproof,”

he answers that he is quite well aware of it, but

“ my strict hand  
Was made to seize on vice, and with a gripe  
Squeeze out the humour of such spongy souls,  
As lick up every idle vanity.”

He declares that he is only trying to please the discriminating members of the audience, and leaves them to assume his character in the play with a parting shot :

“ Now, gentlemen, I go  
To turn an actor and a humourist,  
Where, ere I do resume my present person,  
We hope to make the circles of your eyes  
Flow with distilled laughter ; if we fail,  
We must impute it to this only chance,  
Art hath an enemy called ignorance.”

Asper having made his exit, Cordatus entertains Mitis with an earnest discourse on the history and theory of comedy. Then comes the Prologue, who has forgotten his part and is only too pleased to let Cordatus speak for him until he is inter-

rupted in his turn by the entrance of Carlo Buffone.

"What may this fellow be?" asks Mitis, as Buffone retires.

"He is one the author calls him Carlo Buffone, an impudent common jester, a violent railer, and an incomprehensible epicure; one whose company is desired of all men, but beloved of none; he will sooner lose his soul than a jest, and profane even the most holy things, to excite laughter; no honourable or reverend personage whatsoever can come within the reach of his eye but is turned into all manner of variety, by his adulterate similes."

"You paint forth a monster," exclaims Mitis.

"He will prefer all countries before his native, and thinks he can never sufficiently, or with admiration enough, deliver his affectionate conceit of foreign atheistical policies."<sup>1</sup>

Whereupon the knowing critic leant over his neighbour and whispered, "John Marston?" and his neighbour answered, "Yes, I think so."

A little later in the play Carlo is addressed as "Thou Grand Scourge, or Second Untruss of the time," which seems a fairly obvious hit at Marston's *Scourge of Villany*, published the year

<sup>1</sup> Gifford's *Jonson*, Induction.

before. From a different direction other attacks are made when Puntarvolo reads out the bill of an unemployed gentleman :

" If there be any lady or gentlewoman of good carriage that is desirous to entertain to her private uses a young, straight and upright gentleman of the age of five or six and twenty at the most ; who can serve in the nature of a gentleman-usher, and hath little legs of purpose, and a black satin suit of his own, to go before her in ; which suit for the more sweetening, now lies in lavender ; and can hide his face with her fan, if need require ; or sit in the cold at the stairfoot for her, as well as another gentleman : let her subscribe her name and place, and diligent respect shall be given." <sup>1</sup> Marston's " little legs " could always raise a laugh.

Then Clove says to Orange (" an inseparable pair of coxcombs, city born " these two), " Monsieur Orange, yon gallants observe us ; prithee lets talk fustian a little and gull them, make them belive we are great scholars "—which they do by borrowing some of the far-fetched expressions from *Histriomastix* and the *Scourge of Villany*.

It is idle for Jonson to pretend that in this play he is merely disparaging Marston's literary

<sup>1</sup> Gifford's *Jonson*, i. 98.

style. The attacks, as these extracts show, were bitter, personal and nasty. Probably he felt himself above his opponent after the pistol incident.

The war was now in full swing. Others besides Marston were ridiculed, or thought themselves so, by *Every Man out of his Humour*, and reprisals followed. Jonson soon dropped the Chamberlain's and became reconciled with the Admiral's once more; in August and September he collaborated with Dekker, Chettle and another writer in two tragedies, the *Page of Plymouth* and *Robert II, King of Scots*<sup>1</sup>—both bread-and-butter plays which have perished. But Marston's pen was more dangerous than his pistol. He was another of the "British men of war" and could put four broadsides into the "Spanish Great Gallion" before the heavier vessel could load—in plainer language, Marston had a keener sense of humour than Jonson and was a much quicker writer. He replied by producing in 1600 and 1601, *Antonio and Mellida*, *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, *Antonio's Revenge* and *What You Will*; all of which were brought out by the Children of Paul's.

<sup>1</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, i. 110, 111.



In 1600 the second campaign began. Jonson had once more left Henslowe and the Admiral's men at the Rose and produced *Cynthia's Revels* for the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars Theatre. Subsequent events suggest that he had now quarrelled with both of the professional companies. Anyhow, at the Blackfriars he found a better-class audience where his worth could be more appreciated and, too, where the precocious young actors were more amenable to Ben's instruction than grown players with views of their own. From this vantage point Jonson could see more Humours to chastise, and laid about him vigorously. Several of the lesser ornaments of the Court, including ladies, are satirized (apparently under thin disguises) for their various failings, and of course Marston comes in, under the pleasant name of Anaides.<sup>1</sup> He is described by Mercury to Cupid as one that

"has two essential parts of the courtier, pride and ignorance; marry, the rest comes somewhat after the ordinary gallant. 'Tis Impudence itself, Anaides; one that speaks all that comes in his checks, and will blush no more than a sackbut. He lightly occupies the jester's room

<sup>1</sup> i.e. "Shameless."

at the table, and keeps laughter, Gelaia, a wench in page's attire, following him in place of a squire, whom he now and then tickles with some strange ridiculous stuff, utter'd as his land came to him, by chance. He will censure or discourse of anything, but as absurdly as you will wish. His fashion is not to take knowledge of him that is beneath him in clothes. He never drinks below the salt. He does naturally admire his wit that wears gold lace or tissue: stabs any man that speaks more contemptibly of the scholar than he. He is a great proficient in all the illiberal sciences, as cheating, swaggering. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

In the background stalks the solemn figure of Crites, the just, upright man who fears no slander, the judge of the age and its fearless castigator. Crites is a very obvious portrait of "Mr. Jonson by Himself." He is

"a creature of most perfect and divine temper: one, in whom the humours and elements are peaceably met, without emulation of precedency; he is neither too fantastically melancholy, too slowly phlegmatic, too lightly sanguine, or too rashly choleric; but in all so composed and ordered, as it is clear Nature went about some full work, she did more than make a man when

<sup>1</sup> *Cynthia's Revels*, II. i.

she made him. His discourse is like his behaviour, uncommon, but not unpleasing; he is prodigal of neither. He strives rather to be that which men call judicious, than to be thought so; and is so truly learned, that he affects not to show it. He will think and speak his thoughts both freely; but as distant from depraving another man's merit, as proclaiming his own. For his valour, 'tis such, that he dares as little to offer an injury as receive one. In sum, he hath a most ingenuous and sweet spirit, a sharp and season'd wit, a straight judgment and a strong mind. Fortune could never break him, nor make him less. He counts it his pleasure to despise pleasures, and is more delighted with good deeds than goods. It is a competency to him that he can be virtuous. He doth neither covet nor fear; he hath too much reason to do either; and that commends all things to him." <sup>1</sup>

There are a few haughty sneers at the "common players," but the author cannot be bothered to deal seriously with such trash.

Jonson at this period in his life, and indeed until he grew mellowed with fame and favour, cannot have been an attractive person. He shows himself incredibly conceited and quarrelsome, a

<sup>1</sup> II. i.

bully, snob and prig. Drummond says much the same nearly twenty years later when he added to the "Notes" his own opinion of his guest :

"January 19. 1619.

"He is a great lover and praiser of himself, a contemner and Scorne of others, given rather to losse a friend, than a jest, jealous of every word and action of those about him (especiallie after drink) which is one of the Elements in which he liveth, a dissembler of ill parts which raigne in him, a bragger of some good that he wanteth, thinketh nothing well bot what either he himself, or some of his friends and Countrymen hath said or done. he is passionately kynde and angry, carelesse either to gaine or keep, vindicative, but if he be well answered, at himself. for any religion as being versed in both.

"Interpreteth best sayings and deeds often to the worst : oppressed with fantasie, which hath ever mastered his reason, a generall disease in many poets. his inventions are smooth and easie, but above all he excelleth in a translation.

"when his Play of a Silent woman was first acted, ther was found Verses after on the stage against him, concluding that, that play was well named the Silent Woman: ther was never one man to say Plaudite to it." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Conversations*, p. 27.

Nor were Marston's manners pleasant. John Manningham in his *Diary* records the following story under the date 21 November 1602 :

"Jo. Marstone the last Christmas he daunct with Alderman Mores wiues daughter, a Spaniard borne. Fell into a strange commendacion of hir witt and beauty. When he had done, shee thought to pay him home, and told him she thought he was a poet. 'Tis true,' said he, 'for poets fayne and lye, and soe dyd I when I commended your beauty, for you are exceeding foule.'"<sup>1</sup>

Marston's reply to *Cynthia's Revels* was comparatively mild. But as he was a much quicker writer, the combined effect of many little pin-pricks was doubtless most irritating to so sensitive an opponent. Moreover, he affected an excess of modesty which was in strong contrast to Jonson's treatment of the public. The *Scourge of Villany* was dedicated to "Oblivion"; he says that *What You Will* is

"A silly subject, too too simply clad."<sup>2</sup>

His *Antonio and Mellida* is

"The worthless present of slight Idleness."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Diary of John Manningham*, Camden Society's Publications, No. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Prologue.

<sup>3</sup> Prologue.

By such an attitude he disarmed criticism and magnified the slight successes which he scored off his boastful rival.

Even in his answers to some of the more outrageous charges, he was exceedingly temperate. He imitates Jonson by prefacing some of his plays with an "Induction," and in *Antonio and Mellida* (Part I) he parodies Jonson's Crites (see p. 137) in a character called Feliche :

"Tis steady and must seem so impreguably fortified with his own content that no envious thought could ever invade his spirit ; never surveying any man so unmeasuredly happy, whom I thought not justly hateful for some true impoverishment ; never beholding any favour of Madam Felicity gracing another, which his well-bounded content persuaded not to hang in the front of his own fortune ; and therefore as far from envying any man, as he valued all men infinitely distant from accomplished beatitude. These native adjuncts appropriate to me the name of Feliche. But last, good, thy humour." <sup>1</sup>

However, the actor could, and possibly did, add plenty of venom to this seemingly gentle speech by caricaturing Jonson's voice and gesture.

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of John Marston*, ed. A. H. Bullen, 1887. (Induction, l. 113.)

The references in *What You Will* are more pointed. In the Induction, following that of *Every Man out of his Humour*, certain "spectators" discuss the author. "Now believe it, Doricus," remarks Philomuse, "his spirit

"Is higher blooded than to quake and pant  
At the report of Scoff's artillery.  
Shall he be crest-fallen, if some looser brain,  
In flux of wit uncivilly befilt  
His slight composures? Shall his bosom faint,  
If drunken Censure belch out sour breath  
From Hatred's surfeit on his labour's front?  
Nay, say some half a dozen rancorous breasts  
Should plant themselves on purpose to discharge  
Imposthum'd malice on his latest scene,  
Shall his resolve be struck with the blirt  
Of a goose-breath? What imperfect born,  
What short-liv'd meteor, what cold-hearted snow  
Would melt in colour, cloud his mudded eyes,  
Sink down his jaws, if that some juiceless husk,  
Some boundless ignorance, should on sudden shoot  
His gross-knobb'd burbolt<sup>1</sup> with—'That's not so  
good;  
Mew, blirt, ha, ha, light chaffy stuff!'"<sup>2</sup>

Later on the Prologue begins—

"Nor labours he the favour of the rude,  
Nor offers sops unto the Stygian dog,  
To force a silence in his viperous tongues;

---

<sup>1</sup> "A short blunt arrow for killing birds without piercing them."  
—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Induction, 25-44.

Nor cares he to insinuate the grace  
Of loath'd detraction, nor pursues the love  
Of the nice critics of this squeamish age ;  
Nor strives he to bear up with every sail  
Of floating censure ; nor once dreads or cares  
What envious hand his guiltless muse hath struck ;  
Sweet breath from tainted stomachs who can suck ? ”

In its opening stages, the war had been mainly a personal and literary quarrel. The regular players must have been only too pleased to see Jonson leave them, but soon they began to feel the effects of the rising excitement.

Audiences at the public theatres were mainly composed of two classes, the groundlings who paid a penny for their place in the yard, and the gallants who occupied the galleries and sometimes the stage as well. To this latter class the boys proved a great attraction ; and indeed the numerous personalities of the theatre war appealed, and were intended to appeal, to a small but select circle. Hence there are not many echoes of the strife in plays written for the public stage.

In 1601 the third and decisive campaign opened. So far there had only been skirmishes, carried on by “ gags,” parodies, prologues, and minor characters. Jonson now determined on an attack in



force. He would write a play with himself as hero and his enemies as villains in which Right should very signally triumph. *Poetaster* was written in fifteen weeks, quick work for Jonson but nothing for Dekker, who, as has been shown, could write a good play in less than a month. Jonson was not the man to keep silence about his great revenge, probably he boasted openly about it, and perhaps even read titbits to his tavern cronies. There was a goodly company of tale-bearers to drop hints to his enemies, who soon got to know of the great Revenge.

The Chamberlain's were now beginning to feel the pinch, and plotted to get even. The new Fortune also was doing badly, with the result that Dekker was out of a job, and doubtless only too glad to accept any offer. He agreed to answer Jonson.

Meanwhile Jonson heard of this alliance just as he was finishing the great work, and hastily coupled his new enemy with Marston for castigation.

*Poetaster, His Arraignment* was brought out by the Children at the Blackfriars probably in the autumn of 1601. There was little disguise in the characters of the chief actors. Jonson is

Horace, Dekker Demetrius, and Marston Crispinus at the Court of Augustus. The plot is loosely constructed and double ; the first story being concerned with Ovid and Julia the Emperor's daughter, who are both disgraced after being discovered masquerading as gods and goddesses at a banquet. The second plot tells of the adventures and troubles of Horace at the hands of the inferior writers and bores Crispinus and Demetrius, culminating in their formal trial and condemnation before Cæsar. These two stories are connected by the character of Tucca, a captain whose record of service is somewhat dubious. Tucca, according to Dekker, was a real person—a certain Captain Hannan.

Horace first appears in Act III, taking the air. He is suddenly surprised by Crispinus, who cannot be shaken off. It is a clever, witty scene, quite openly dramatizing Horace's account of his meeting with the bore<sup>1</sup> and gives Jonson an opportunity for a little self-praise from his persistent admirer. "Troth, Horace, thou art exceeding happy in thy friends and acquaintance ; they are all most choice spirits, of the first ranke of Romanes : I doe not know that poet, I protest, ha's us'd his

<sup>1</sup> I, Sat. ix.

fortune more prosperously, then thou hast.”<sup>1</sup> Horace is finally liberated from his tormentor in just the same way as his prototype was—Crispinus is arrested for debt at the suit of “Master Minos the apothecary,” and Horace escapes. However, whilst Crispinus is wrangling with his captors, Tucca appears, goes bail, and is conciliating him with his creditor when an actor passes by. Tucca makes him halt and promise a supper. He then tenders some advice :

“ ‘Doest thou know that Caprichio there ?’  
‘No, I assure you, Captain.’ ‘Goe, and bee acquainted with him, then ; hee is a gent’man, parcell-poet, you slave : his father was a man of worship, I tell thee. Goe, he pens high, loftie, in a new stalking strain ; bigger then halfe the rimers i’ the towne, againe : he was borne to fill thy mouth, Minotaurus, he was : hee will teach thee to teare, and rand, rascall, to him, cherish his muse, goe : thou hast fortie, fortie shillings, I meane, stinkard, give him in earnest, doe, he shall write for thee, slave. If hee pen for thee once, thou shalt not need to travell, with thy pumps full of gravell, any more, after a blind jade and a hamper : and stalke upon boords, and barrell heads, to an old crackt trumpet.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Poetaster and Satiromastix*, ed. J. H. Penniman. Belles Lettres Series.

<sup>2</sup> III. iv. 183.

A few lines later *Tucca* accuses the actors of having "nothing but humours, revells, and satyres."

"No, I assure you, *Captaine*, not wee. They are on the other side of *Tyber* : we have as much ribaldrie in our plaies, as can bee, as you would wish, *Captaine* : all the sinners, i' the suburbs, come, and applaud our action, daily.

"*Tucca*. I heare, you 'll bring me o' the stage there ; you 'll play me, they say : I shall be presented by a sort of copper-lac't scoundrels of you : life of *Pluto*, and you stage me, stinkard ; your mansions shall sweat for 't, your tabernacles, varlets, your Globes, and your *Triumphs*."

Most critics have considered that *Caprichio* is another name for *Marston*, who was certainly the son of a man of worship, his father being a member of the Middle Temple, and later in the play *Crispinus* calls himself "parcell poet" (*i.e.* part poet). But there is an obvious objection to this identification in the fact that *Marston* has already a part to himself.

It seems more probable that *Shakespeare* is intended. Two years before *John Shakespeare*, after a rebuff in 1596, had been granted a coat of arms by the *Heralds*, so that the poet could now

call himself "gentleman." The affair caused some amusement (and indignation) at the time, and Tucca seems to refer to it :

"They [*the players*] are growne licentious, the rogues; libertines, flat libertines. They forget they are i' the statute, the rascals, they are blazond there, there they are trickt, they and their pedigrees; they need no other heralds, I wisse."<sup>1</sup>

The rest of Tucca's remarks fit in very well with what we know of Shakespeare at this period. *Hamlet* had been brought out a short time before, and might aptly be called "high, loftie, in a stalking straine." Hamlet, too, in a similar scene had warned the players about tearing and rending. *Caprichio*<sup>2</sup> is not by any means an unlikely title for Shakespeare, who was still chiefly famous as a licentious poet.<sup>3</sup>

It is also worth noting that, when Jonson edited the play for his folio edition some fifteen years later, he altered the name "*Caprichio*" to "*Pantalabus*." This name occurs in Act III. Scene v. of the *Poetaster*, where Horace speaks of

<sup>1</sup> I. ii. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Touchstone speaks of "that capricious poet, honest Ovid."—*A.T.L.*, III. iii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> See *Returne from Parnassus*, Part II. I. ii. 304.

“Pantalabus railing in his sawcie jests”—the whole scene is a translation of II. Sat. i. of the real Horace, and as the name Pantalabus occurs in the original passage, it has obviously no personal application in the play.

Act iv. is taken up with Ovid's disgraceful banquet and its consequences. Thereafter the story returns to Horace.

The whole of Augustus' court is met to hear Virgil read a portion of his *Æneid*—and for this purpose Jonson chooses some thirty-five lines from the fourth book to translate. But the reading is interrupted by the entrance of Tucca, Crispinus, Demetrius, Histrio (the actor) and Lupus, an informer and spy, who thinks that he has found some seditious matter in Horace's study. The spy is soon silenced and expelled. The courtiers then persuade Augustus to let Horace arraign his other detractors. Virgil is appointed as judge with Mæcenas and Cornelius Gallus to assist him. The charge is read out :

“Rufus Laberius Crispinus, and Demetrius Fannius, hold up your hands. You are, before this time joyntly and seuerally indited, and here presently to be arraigned” . . . that you “ have most ignorantly, foolishly, and (more like your

selves) maliciously, gone about to deprave, and calumniate the person and writings of Quintus Horacius Flaccus, here present, poet, and priest to the Muses: and to that end have mutually conspir'd and plotted at sundry times, as by severall meanes, and in sundry places, for the better accomplishing your base and envious purpose; taxing him, falsly, of selfe-love, arrogancy, impudence, rayling, filching by translation, &c. Of all which calumnies, and every of them, in manner and forme aforesaid, what answere you? Are you guiltie, or not guiltie?"<sup>1</sup>

Tucca at his own suggestion joins the judges. Evidence is produced. Tibullus, acting as clerk to the court, shows Crispinus and Demetrius their calumnies on Horace, which the authors are obliged to acknowledge as their own work. Horace answers them heatedly, but they are too crestfallen to defend themselves and are judged guilty. Demetrius (Dekker) tamely acknowledges that he was jealous of Horace because he kept better company and his writings were more liked. Crispinus (Marston), being the greater offender, is treated with a pill which soon acts on his brain and makes him vomit—with some difficulty—his tumid words. After this he feels

<sup>1</sup> v. iii.

better. Virgil, however, fears that the effect will only be passing and advises him

“hence-forth, learne  
To beare your selfe more humbly ; not to swell  
Or breathe your insolent, and idle spight,  
On him, whose laughter, can your worst affright.’

The culprits are made to swear to their future behaviour :

“You shall here solemnely attest, and sweare ;  
That never (after this instant) either, at Booke-  
sellers stalls, in tavernes, two-penny roomes,  
’tyring houses, noble-mens buttries, puisne’s  
chambers (the best and farthest places, where  
you are admitted to come) you shall once offer,  
or dare (thereby to endear your selfe the more  
to any player, engle,<sup>1</sup> or guiltie gull, in your  
companie) to maligne, traduce, or detract the  
*person* or writings of Quintus Horacius Flaccus ;  
or any other eminent man, transcending you in  
merit, whom your envy shall find cause to worke  
upon, either, for that, or for keeping himselfe in  
better acquaintance, or enjoying better friends :  
. . . Neither shall you at any time (ambitiously,  
affecting the title of the untrussers, or whippers  
of the age) suffer the itch of writing to over-run  
your performance in libell ; upon paine of being  
taken up for lepers in wit, and (losing both your

<sup>1</sup> Hanger-on.



time, and your papers) bee irrecoverably forfeited to the hospitall of Fooles. So helpe you our Roman gods, and the Genius of great Cæsar."

And so, after a few words from Cæsar, the play closes. The tone of *Postaster* is in a way less bitter than some of the previous attacks because Jonson is so disdainfully contemptuous. It is pretty clear that he had found patrons of high rank, or else he would never have risked the enmity of those who normally employed him. For a short time he seemed to have scored heavily, but Dekker was soon ready with the reply.

*Satiromastix, or the Untrussing of the Humourous Poet* was publicly staged by the Chamberlain's and privately by the Children of Paul's. There is every indication that it was written in a hurry and that Dekker has hastily patched the anti-Jonson scenes on to another play.

The main story tells of the lust of William Rufus for the bride of Sir Walter Terril and how it was turned aside. The second set of incidents form a typical Elizabethan comic under-plot showing the adventures of Tucca (the *Postaster* washbuckler), Sir Rees ap Vaughan, a Welsh

knight, and Mistress Minever, an ancient but not over-virtuous dame. Horace hovers on the circle, treated with contempt by all except Asinius Bubo, his "ingle." Every possible reference to Jonson's peculiarities and adventures is dragged in. He is a "poore lyme and hayre rascall," a "foulefisted mortar-treader"—the bricklaying business was never forgotten; he is reminded of the Gabriel Spencer affair by a *respice funem*, asked if he is not yet famous enough for killing a player but he must eat men alive. In another place Tucca remarks "the best verse that ever I knew him hacke out was his white neck-verse" (when he had escaped hanging by benefit of clergy).

Jonson had been rash enough to criticize his enemies' looks. This was foolish, for "his ungodly face," they reply, "lookes for all the world like a rotten russet apple when 'tis bruized: its better than a spoonful of sinamon next my hearte, for mee to heare him speake, he soundes it so i' th' nose, and talkes and randes for all the world like the poore fellow under Ludgate"—a very unkind cut, as Jonson prided himself on his skill as a reader.

The trial comes about at the end of the play,

when King William has satisfactorily apologized for his dishonourable conduct. Horace is dragged in bound, and accused before the King by Tucca and Sir Vaughan alternately :

“Thou hast no part of Horace in thee but 's name and his damnable vices,” cries out the former ; “thou hast such a terrible mouth, that they beard 's afraide to peepe out : but, looke heere, you staring Leviathan, heere 's the sweete visage of Horace ; looke perboyld-face, looke : Horace had a trim long-beard, and a reasonable good face for a poet, (as faces goe now-a-dayes) : Horace did not skrue and wriggle himselfe into great mens familiarity, (impudentlie) as thou doost : nor weare the badge of gentlemens company, as thou doost thy taffetie sleeves, tactkt too onely with some pointes of profit : no, Horace had not his face puncht full of oylet-holes, like the cover of a warming pan : Horace lov'd poets well, and gave coxcombes to none but fooles, but thou lov'st none, neither wisemen nor fooles, but thy selfe : Horace was a goodly corrupt gentleman, and not so leane a hollow-cheekt scrag as thou art : no, heere 's thee copy of they countenance, by this will I learne to make a number of villanous faces more, and to looke scurvily upon th' world as thou dost.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> v. ii. 275.



BEN JONSON

*For the Father: The National Portrait Gallery*



Finally Sir Vaughan administers an oath, with many interruptions from Tucca :

“ *Inprimis*, you shall sweare by Phoebus and the halfe score muses lacking one, not to sweare to hang your selfe, if you thought any man, ooman<sup>1</sup> or silde, could write playes and rimes, as well-favour'd ones as your selfe. . . .

“ You shall sweare not to bumbast out a new play, with the old lynings of jestes, stolen from the Temples Revels.

“ Moreover, you shall not sit in a gallery, when your comedies and enterludes have entred their actions, and there make vile and bad faces at everie lyne, to make scntlemen have an eye to you, and to make players afraide to take your part.

“ Besides, you must forswcare to venter on the stage, when your play is ended, and to exchange curtezies and complements with gallants in the lordes roomes, to make all the house rise up in armes, and to cry that's Horace, that's he, that's he, that's he, that pennecs and purges humours and diseases.

“ Secondly, when you bid all your frends to the marriage of a poore couple, that is to say, your *Wits and necessities, alias dictus, to the rifling of your Muse, alias your Muses up-sitting*,

<sup>1</sup> The Welsh knight talks stage Welsh.

*alias, a poets Whitson-Ale*, you shall sweare that within three dayes after you shall not abroad, in booke-binders shops, brag that your Vizeroyes or Tributorie-Kings, have done homage to you, or paide quarterage. . . .

“Thirdly, and last of all, saving one, when your playes are misse-likt at court, you shall not crye mew like a pusse-cat and say you are glad you write out of the courtiers element.

“In brieflynes, when you sup in tavernes amongst your betters, you shall sweare not to dippe your manners in too much sawce, nor at table to fling epigrams, embleames, or play-speeches about you (lyke hayle-stones) to keepe you out of the terrible daunger of the shot, upon payne to sit at the upper end of the table, a’ th’ left hand of Carlo Buffon.”<sup>1</sup>

*Satiromastix*, as an exhibition of art and learning, falls far below *Poetaster*; as a counter-attack, it was thoroughly effective. Dekker challenged an answer, but Jonson had had enough. He wrote a tame “apologeticall Dialogue” to the quarto of *Poetaster* wherein he claims “I us’d no name, my bookes have still beene taught, to spare the persons and to speake the vices.” He has been misjudged; his attacks against the lawyers,

<sup>1</sup> v. ii. 326 *et seq.*

for instance, were not intended against his contemporaries but are quotations from Ovid. He will not answer the Untrussers, it would show that he had been hit. This dialogue, which Jonson suppressed in the folio of 1616, was "only once spoken upon the stage"; it was a plain acknowledgment of defeat.

The public evidently sided with the Untrussers, and for a time Jonson was most unpopular, for in the *Returne from Parnassus*, Part 2 (Christmas 1601), which mirrors public opinion at the time, he is called by Judicio "the wittiest fellow of a Bricklayer in England." But Ingenioso says :

"A meere Emphyrick, one that getts what he hath by obseruation, and makes onely nature priuy to what he indites. So slow an inuentor that he were better betake himselfe to his old trade of Bricklaying, a bould whorson as confident now in making a booke, as he was in times past in laying of a brick." <sup>1</sup>

In Act iv. Scene iii. of the same play, Burbage and Kemp discuss the University Wits :

"Few of the vniuersity (men) pen plaies well, they smell to much of that writer *Ouid* and that writer *Metamorphosis*, and talke too much of

<sup>1</sup> I. ii. 296.



*Proserpina & Iuppiter*. Why heres our fellow *Shakespeare* puts them all downe, I and *Ben Ionson* too. O that *Ben Ionson* is a pestilent fellow he brought vp *Horace* giuing the Poets a pill, but our fellow *Shakespeare* hath giuen him a purge that made him beray his credit."

The meaning of this passage has been much disputed, and so far has not been quite satisfactorily explained. Some critics have proposed *Troilus and Cressida* as Shakespeare's share in the controversy, Thersites being Jonson: but a great objection to this theory is that the usual indications point to 1603 as the date of the play—that is, after the *Returne from Parnassus* was written.

Another suggestion is either that as *Satiromastix* was acted by the Chamberlain's it could be called Shakespeare's, or else that Shakespeare was responsible for bringing in Dekker; neither explanation being at all convincing. Others still, hoping that Shakespeare would be above such an action, hold that Kemp is merely saying that Shakespeare had given Jonson a purge by his greater success as a dramatist, especially of Roman plays. The latest and most attractive proposal is that made by the editors of the New Cambridge Shakespeare, in their introduction to the *Merry*

*Wives*, of which the pirated text was first entered on 18 January 1602. For various reasons they identify Corporal Nym with Jonson :

“Putting these facts together, we suggest that here may lie the explanation of that mysterious ‘purge’ which Shakespeare at one time gave to the great Ben, introducing him into this topical and rather scandalous play as Corporal Nym, prating of his ‘humours,’ reiterating the word until its boredom becomes comic, under a make-up which ridiculed Jonson in person and even in face. We drop the suggestion and run for our lives.”<sup>1</sup>

If this explanation is the true one, Shakespeare certainly had the last word. The *Merry Wives* was produced “by command” before the Queen, and to satirize Jonson at Court in this way would have been the final and most devastating blow.

After *Satiromastix* the stage war, except for occasional rumblings, was brought to an end. It is as well not to take the personal side too seriously. Both Jonson and Marston were doubtless much hurt and embittered at the time, but the wounds soon healed, and in 1605—as will be seen

<sup>1</sup> *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, edited by Sir A. Quiller-Couch and J. Dover Wilson, Cambridge, 1921, p. xxxii.

in the next chapter—Marston and Chapman collaborated with Jonson to turn their satire on the Scots who were then swarming in London. A few months earlier Marston had dedicated his *Malcontent* :

BENJAMINO JONSONIO  
POETAE  
ELEGANTISSIMO  
GRAVISSIMO  
AMICO  
SVO CANDIDO ET CORDATO  
JOHANNES MARSTON  
MVVSARUM ALUMNVS  
ASPERAM HANC THALIAM  
D D

## CHAPTER V

### THE NEW GENERATION

For some years now Englishmen had realized that future promotion would come from Scotland, and it is not surprising that a party of English actors had made their way to Edinburgh in November 1599. The kirk naturally refused to have anything to do with them, but the King took their part and caused a royal proclamation to be issued that they were not to be hindered. This party of players was led by Laurence Fletcher (whose origin is unknown) and Martin Slater, an ex-Admiral's man.<sup>1</sup>

Two years later Fletcher again took some players north who, on their return in 1602, acted at Norwich, calling themselves "The King's Players." The fact that Fletcher later appears as a Chamberlain's man has caused some critics to suggest that the Chamberlain's themselves during their tours in these years actually got as

<sup>1</sup> Lee, *Life*, p. 83.

far as Scotland, but there is no evidence that they went on tour in 1599 or 1601 nor that they ever went so far north; in fact York and Chester are the most distant towns they are known to have visited (see p. 84). In this connection it has been suggested that certain passages in *Macbeth* (1. iv. 1-6) show local knowledge of Scotland, but for that matter internal evidence can be made to fit most theories; the *Merchant of Venice*, for instance, gives equally cogent reasons for supposing that Shakespeare knew Italy.

Meanwhile in London the winter of 1601 saw the end of the Theatre war and a gradual return to more normal ways. The *Diary* shows that at the Fortune, which had been opened late in 1600, Henslowe made payments for nine new plays during the period May to September, as compared with two only in the previous autumn.<sup>1</sup>

The Chamberlain's had been unlucky in 1600, and, if the number of play manuscripts which they sold during that year signifies anything, had been almost desperately hard up. But with the suppression of Jonson their future now improved. Shakespeare, during these months, produced much of his best work, which, as contemporary apprecia-

<sup>1</sup> *Diary*, ii. 352.

tions tell us, was well received. *Much Ado, As You Like It* and *Henry V* are mentioned in the *Stationers' Register* of 4 August 1600, and probably were fairly new at that date; *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Cæsar* and *Hamlet* belong to the months immediately following (1600-2).

Another misfortune came to the Chamberlain's in 1600—Will Kemp left them. Kemp was one of the original sharers in the Globe, but shortly after the Company moved there, he sold his shares and quitted the Company. In August 1602 he appears in Henslowe's *Diary* as acting with Worcester's Men. There has been some controversy about the date and reasons for Kemp's action. The true explanation is probably to be found in the "nine days' wonder" of his dance to Norwich.

At the beginning of Lent 1600, Kemp danced from London to Norwich via Chelmsford and Braintree. The venture, as he shows in his little account of it, the *Nine Daies Wonder*, was a great success. He was received everywhere with great enthusiasm. Financially, too, he did well. He mentions two presents of £5 and a pension of 40s. a year from the Mayor of Norwich. In addition he won many bets (but seems to have

had some difficulty in collecting them), and doubtless the hat went round of an evening.

Accordingly he made up his mind to repeat the performance on a larger scale by dancing over the Alps. His reputation had reached the Continent ; and some years previously, in 1585-6, he had already made a most successful tour in Germany and Denmark.

Unfortunately the venture was a complete failure. A contemporary note (in a manuscript entitled "Ricardi Smith, Abendonienſis, *Rerum Vulgatarum Notæ*") says :

"1601, September 2,  
Kemp mimus quidam, qui peregrinationem  
quandam in Germaniam et Italiam instituerat,  
post multos errores et infortunia sua, reversus ;  
multa refert de Anthonio Sherly equite aurato  
quem Romae (Legatum Persicum agentem) con-  
venerat." <sup>1</sup>

His desertion at such a time would naturally have been resented by his fellows, and his return probably inspired Hamlet's sneer at "those who play your Clown." The Chamberlain's had filled his place and he was compelled to join with an inferior company. He is not heard of again.

<sup>1</sup> B. Mus., MSS. Sloane, 414, fol. 56.



KEMP DANCING, TO NORWICH  
(from the *Life-page of 'The Lane Dances Winder'*)





The days following Essex's death were full of trouble and anxiety. The old Queen was broken-hearted at the death of her favourite and became almost unapproachable; everywhere men feared what the future might bring forth.

Sir John Harrington wrote on 9 October 1601 to his friend Sir Hugh Portman that the Queen is "quite disfavoured, and unattired, and these troubles waste her much. She disregardeth every costlie cover that cometh to the table, and taketh little but manchet and succory pottage. Every new message from the city doth disturb her, and she frowns on all the ladies."

Writing to his wife just over a year later (27 December 1602), he says:

"It was not manie daies since I was bidden to her presence. I bleste the happy momente; and founde her in moste pitiable state. She bade the archbishope aske me if I had seene Tyrone? I replied, with reverence, that 'I had seene him withe the Lord Deputie.' She lookede up, with much choler and greife in her countenance, and saide, 'Oh, nowe it mindeth me that you was *one* who sawe this manne *elsewhere*:'—and hereat, she droppede a teare, and smote her bosome. She helde in her hande a goldene cuppe, whiche she often put to her lippes; but, in soothe, her

hearte seemeth too fulle to lacke more fillinge. This sighte movede me to thinke on what paste in Irelande ; and I truste she did not lesse thinke on *some* who were busier there than myselfe. She gave me a message to the Lord Deputie, and bade me come to the chamber at seven o clocke. Hereat some who were aboute her did marvel, as I do not holde so highe place as those she did not chuse to do her commandes. Deare Mall, if I gette no profite, I shall gette some envie, and this businesse maye turne to some account withe the Lord Deputie. Her Majestie enquirede of some matters whiche I had written ; and as she was pleasede to note my fancifulle braine, I was not unheedfull to feede her humoure, and reade some verses, whereat she smilede once, and was pleasede to saie ;—‘ When thou doste feele creeping tyme at thye gate, these fooleries will please thee lesse ; I am paste my relishe for suche matters : thou seeste my bodilie meate dothe not suite me well ; I have eaten but one ill tastede cake since yesternight.’ She rated moste grievouslie, at noone, at some who minded not to bring uppe certaine matters of accounte. Several menne have been sente to, and when readie at hande, her Highnesse hathe dismissede in anger ; but who, dearest Mall, shall saye, that ‘ *your Highnesse hathe forgotten.* ’ ” <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Harrington, *Nugae Antiquae*, i. 317 and 322.

Hamlet was only echoing what every prominent man thought when he said—

“The time is out of joint ;—O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right.”

On 24 March 1603 Queen Elizabeth died, leaving James of Scotland as her successor. The new King, whose more obvious faults and failings are adequately expressed in any history book, was a keen playgoer, and his sons, Henry and Charles, were youths of very real culture. A new era had opened ; for the next forty years, poet, artist and player received every encouragement at the Court, whilst in the streets of the city the murmur of disapproval grew louder and louder.

Six weeks later, James had reached Greenwich on his progress from Scotland, where a warrant was issued to appoint the Chamberlain's as the King's own players :

“Iames by the grace of god &c To all Iustices Maiors Sheriffs Constables hedborowes and other our Officers and louinge Subiects greetinge knowe yee that Wee of our speciall grace certeine knowledge & mere motion haue licenced and aucthorized and by theise p'sentes doe licence and aucthorize theise our Servaunts lawrence ffletcher

Willm Shakespeare Richard Burbage Augustyne  
Phillippes Iohn heninges henrie Condell Willm  
Sly Robt Armysn Richard Cowly and the rest of  
theire Associates freely to vse and exercise the  
Arte and faculty of playinge Comedies Tragedies  
histories Enterludes moralls pastoralls Stage-  
plaies and Suche others like as theie haue already  
studied or hereafter shall vse or studie aswell for  
the recreation of our lovinge Subjects as for our  
Solace and pleasure when wee shall thinke good  
to see them duringe our pleasure And the said  
Comedies tragedies histories Enterludes Morralls  
Pastoralls Stageplayes and suche like to shewe  
and to exercise publicly to theire best Comoditie  
when the infection of the plague shall  
decrease aswell within theire nowe vsual howse  
called the Globe within our County of Surrey  
as alsoe within anie towne halls or Mounte halls  
or other conveniente places within the lib[er]ties  
and freedome of anie other Cittie vniversitic  
towne or Boroughs whatsoever within our said  
Realmes and domynions willinge and Commaund-  
inge you and everie of you as you tender our  
pleasure not onelie to p[er]mitt and suffer them  
herein without anie your letts hindrances or  
molestacions during our said pleasure but alsoe  
to be ayinge and assistinge to them yf anie  
wronge be to them offered And to allowe them  
such former Curtesies as hath bene given to men

of their place and quallitie and alsoe what further favour you shall shewe to theise our Servauntes for our sake wee shall take kindlie at your handes In wytnesse whereof &c' witnesse our selfe at westm̃ the nyntenth day of May  
p bre de priuato sigill &c.'<sup>1</sup>

It is a little puzzling to find Laurence Fletcher reappearing at the head of the Chamberlain's (who will henceforth be known as the King's Men), and several explanations have been offered. Mr. Tucker Murray<sup>2</sup> suggests that the King rewarded an old favourite by making him the leader of his new Company. But it seems unnecessary to assume that because Fletcher's name stands first he was therefore the leader; the Company appears never to have had a recognized leader, and in the other lists which have come down, now one name is first, now another. In the "procession list" of the King's Players who took part in the royal entry on 15 March 1604, Fletcher's name is fifth.

An equally possible suggestion is that the Chamberlain's, like every one else who stood to gain or lose by a change of sovereign, looked

<sup>1</sup> *Malone Society's Collections*, I. iii. 264.

<sup>2</sup> *English Dramatic Companies*, I. 172.

ahead. It had been obvious for some time that the Queen could not live much longer; and at her death the office of Lord Chamberlain would be changed. Accordingly, learning how enthusiastically James had received Fletcher and his company in '99, they aspired to become the new King's Men. As part of the scheme they invited Fletcher to join them; and then, when the time came, they presented a petition to succeed the late Queen's players, in which the name of the actor best known to James naturally came first. Unfortunately, beyond the fact that Fletcher appears in the Company in 1603, there is no evidence to support this or any other suggestion.

Fletcher continued with the Company for at least two years, as his name occurs in the will (May 1605) of Augustine Philips.

"Item, I geve and bequeathe to my fellowe, William Shakespeare, a thirty shilling peece in gould; to my fellowe, Henry Condell, one other thirty shilling peece in gould; to my servaunte, Christopher Beeston, thirty shillings in gould; to my fellowe, Lawrence Fletcher, twenty shillings in gould; to my fellowe, Robert Armyne, twenty shillings in gould: to my fellowe, Richard Coweley, twenty shillings in gould; to my fel-

lowe, Alexander Cook, twenty shillings in gould ; to my fellowe, Nicholas Tooley, twenty shillings in gould . . . and I bequeathe unto the said John Hemings, Richard Burbage, and William Slye, to either of them my said overseers, for theire paines herein to be taken, a boule of silver of the value of fyve pounds a piece.”<sup>1</sup>

The act of the King in taking over the Globe players definitely established their position as the leading Company ; at the same time the Admiral's found a new patron in Prince Henry. The whirligig of time had indeed brought in his revenges. Three years before (see p. 114), the official reason given for not entirely suppressing both Globe and Fortune had been that, as the players had to entertain the Queen, it was necessary for them to keep in practice. It is true that this was not seriously meant, but, as an official definition of the actors' status, it might well be dangerous in changed circumstances. Players were now welcome guests at the Court—with the usual advantages that royal favour endows—and the number of performances was much increased. Thus, between Christmas 1598 and March 1603,

<sup>1</sup> Collier, *Memoirs of the Actors in the Plays of Shakespeare*, pp. 86-88.



the Chamberlain's had played eleven times at Court and the Admiral's eight. In the first four years of the new reign (down to the end of 1607), the King's Men performed forty-three times and the Prince Henry's about twenty.

As a sidelight on the social history of the times these facts are valuable. It is scarcely surprising that the Puritan citizens who disapproved of players on principle should have felt very bitter that the King overspent his income in this way and then demanded more from them. James even went farther than this. In 1603 the plague was severe in London and, by the standing regulations of the city, theatres automatically closed until the death-rate declined. This was recognized as one of the ordinary risks of the profession; but the Globe players were now the King's Men, and to compensate them for their inconvenience they were given £30.

"To, Richard Burbadg one of his *Matties* Comedyans uppon the Councells Warrant dated at Hampton Courte 8 Febr. 1603 [4] for the mayntenance and reliefe of himselfe and the reste of his Companye beinge prohibited to present anie playes publiquellie in or neere London by reason of greate perrill that might growe through

the extraordinarie concourse and assemblie of people to a newe increase of the plague till it shall please God to settle the Cyttie in a more perfect health : by waye of his Mat<sup>ties</sup> free gifte  
xxx<sup>11</sup>.<sup>1</sup> ”

The plague continued with great violence all through the summer and autumn. In fact not until March 1604 was it considered safe for the King to make his royal progress through the City. Again both the King's and Prince Henry's Players were remembered, when the former drew four and a half yards, and the latter four of red cloth for their livery for the procession.

Meanwhile Ben Jonson had continued his wanderings. He was last noticed in the autumn of 1601, badly crushed by Dekker's *Satiromastix*, which had appeared publicly at the Globe and privately at Whitefriars. Once more he was reconciled with the Admiral's, as Henslowe notes :

“ Lent vnto m<sup>r</sup> alleyn the 25 of septmbr  
1601 to lend vnto Bengemen Johnson  
vpon his writinge of his adicians in } xxx<sup>xxx</sup>s”  
geronymo <sup>2</sup> the some of }

<sup>1</sup> Cunningham, *Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court*, p. xxxv.

<sup>2</sup> “Geronymo,” i.e. the *Spanish Tragedy*.

And nine months later :

“ Lent vnto Bengemy Johnstone at the a  
 poynt ment of E Alleyn & w<sup>m</sup> birde the  
 22 of June 1602 in earnest of a Boocke }<sup>x<sup>u</sup></sup>  
 called Richard crockbacke & for new  
 adicyons for Jeronymo the some of

Both these plays were doubtless intended to rival the Chamberlain's productions. The *Spanish Tragedy* was refurbished as a counter-attraction to the Globe revival of Kyd's *Hamlet*—practically rewritten by Shakespeare ; Ben's *Richard Crookback* was a set-off to Will's *Richard III*, which, as contemporary references show, was then attracting considerable notice.

The accession of James made Jonson's fortune. He was invited to write an *A Particular Entertainment of the Queen and the Prince at Althorpe, at the Right Honourable the Lord Spencer's on Saturday being the 25th of June 1603*. During this period he had again returned to the Globe, where the King's brought out *Sejanus*. The following March he wrote an *Entertainment to King James in London in passing to his Coronation* ; which was most acceptable and brought Jonson into notice as being the most learned of the professional writers. In the next winter (January

1605) began the long series of Court masques which were composed for the Queen by Jonson and staged by Inigo Jones. From the spectators' point of view this was a most happy collaboration; but the producers, as would be expected, quarrelled continuously and violently on the traditional theme of the relative importance of scenery and dialogue. Thereafter Jonson became more and more attached to the Court, finding less time and inducement to write plays for the public stage.

The chief theatrical sensation of 1605 was *Eastward Ho*, a joint production of Chapman, Jonson and Marston, which was staged by the Children at Blackfriars. As a play it is a good comedy of city life, but the authors—probably Chapman wrote the offending words—took on themselves to mock at the Sovereign and his countrymen. At the King's coming many Scots had descended on the City, where their accent and national characteristics had much amused and irritated Londoners. Moreover, James had been very free in bestowing the honour of knighthood. Accordingly it was a passably good "gag" for one of the characters to remark of Sir Petronel Flash—a most disreputable individual—"I ken

the man weel; hee's one of my thirty pound knights." "No, no, this is he that stole his knighthood o' the grand day for foure pound given to a page." In another passage Seagull, speaking of the blessings of Virginia, says :

"And then you shall live freely there, without sargeants, or courtiers, or lawyers, or intelligencers, onely a few industrious Scots perhaps, who indeed are disperst over the face of the whole earth. But as for them, there are no greater friends to English men and England, when they are out an't, in the world, then they are. And for my part, I would a hundred thousand of them were there, for wee are all one countrey men now, yee know, and wee should finde ten times more comfort of them there then we doe heere."<sup>1</sup>

This dangerous piece of humour got the authors into trouble (see p. 98), and they were lucky to escape with nothing worse than temporary imprisonment. It was no time for humorists. A few months before, Sir Walter Raleigh had been implicated in an attempt on the King's life, and, as the Privy Council knew from their spies, the danger of a successful plot was by no means over.

<sup>1</sup> *Eastward Ho!*, ed. F. E. Schelling, Belles Lettres Series, 1909. (III. iii. 46.)

In the autumn of the same year, the Gunpowder Plot was only discovered at the last moment.

Players had always had the reputation of discussing state affairs under thin disguises, and audiences, especially after the personalities and innuendo of the stage war, were on the look out for "references" which, as often as not, were quite unintentional. It is not, therefore, surprising that the theatres and all who catered for them should be suspect and continually under surveillance. The authorities took the very natural line that anything which tended to bring King or State into disrepute was indirectly, if not directly, encouraging revolution.

So far as the Children were concerned, *Eastward Ho* was only one of several similar episodes in their stormy career at Blackfriars.

As Evans and Giles had progressed with their scheme of turning the Children of the Chapel Royal into an acting company, they had succeeded in getting royal permission, or at least acquiescence, to "take up" children for the Company. Giles as choirmaster had this right, but as his choir only numbered twelve, he need have had little difficulty in filling vacancies. Now, however, Evans began to impress boys simply as

players, and in December 1600 had the impudence to seize the son of a gentleman named Clifton. When the father, who had influential friends, complained, Evans treated him haughtily, and thereupon giving the boy an actor's scroll told him to learn the part at once, or he would be whipped. Clifton, however, soon secured his son's release.

In the course of his inquiries, Clifton found that other boys had been similarly treated. He therefore prepared a complaint for the Star Chamber, which ultimately resulted in Giles and Evans being forbidden to have anything more to do with the Blackfriars Theatre. The latter, however, had already anticipated this order by nominally handing over his interests in the concern to his son-in-law, Alexander Hawkins.<sup>1</sup>

After the death of Queen Elizabeth and the decrease of the plague of 1603, the Blackfriars Company was reorganized under Edward Kirkham, Hawkins and others, and given a licence as The Children of the Queen's Revels. The fresh offence caused by *Eastward Ho* led to several changes. The Queen's patronage was withdrawn, Kirkham was deprived of his post, and

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespearean Playhouses*, 210.

for a short time the theatre was closed. However, as the partners in the concern were still liable to pay the rent of £40 per annum due to Richard Burbage, a certain Richard Keysar was induced to take over the Company. Even so the managers of Blackfriars had not learnt wisdom. In 1606 great offence was caused by a play called the *Isle of Gulls*, which satirized all classes. Two years later they exceeded all pardonable limits by producing, in spite of formal prohibition, Chapman's *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron*.

This play, which portrays contemporary French history in a somewhat unfavourable light, naturally annoyed the French Ambassador, who protested. His official report of the incident, dated 5 April 1608, reads as follows :

“I caused certain Players to be forbid from acting the *History of the Duke of Byron*; when, however, they saw that the whole Court had left the town they persisted in acting it; nay, they brought upon the stage the Queen of France and Mademoiselle de Verneuil. The former having first accosted the latter with very hard words, gave her a box on the ear. At my suit three of them were arrested, but the principal person, the author, escaped.



"One or two days before they had brought forward their own king and his favorites in a very strange fashion. They made him curse and swear because he had been robbed of a bird, and beat a gentleman because he had called off the hounds from the scent.

"He has made an order that no play shall be henceforth acted in London; for the repeal of which order they have already offered 100,000 livres. Perhaps the permission will be again granted, but upon the condition that they represent no recent history, nor speak of the present time."<sup>1</sup>

Chapman's play has survived, but the scenes which caused the trouble were omitted from the printed version.

Jonson's favour with the King was fortunately uninjured by *Eastward Ho*. He was summoned to Court, and thenceforward, except for occasional lapses, an honoured servant. His position was curious. Those less amiable idiosyncrasies, which have so far chiefly been prominent, at any rate showed that he was a man of amazing self-confidence and courage. Nor did royal favour do more than soften the harsher traits of his character. He was in short a person to be con-

<sup>1</sup> *English Dramatic Companies*, i. 356.

sidered and humoured. Above all, in his own eyes he was a Poet, a servant of the Muses, a person, therefore, to be respected for his calling, and by the very force of his character he made his claims recognized. In the next generation the title of poet changed from a name of contempt to a title of honour, and every courtier who could scan a line aspired to be one of "Ben's Sons." Like his namesake the "great Cham," Ben Jonson was one of those great English men of letters who have brought greater honour to literature by personality than achievement.

For the next few years the theatres prospered. From time to time plague broke out and sent the players on tour, but the old external vexations ceased. Both King's and Prince's Men were regularly appointed royal servants, immune from the opposition of Puritans or other enemies of drama. In these years (1604-6) Shakespeare reached his zenith; *Hamlet* was succeeded by *Othello*, *Lear* and *Macbeth*. He seems to have retired to Stratford shortly afterwards. The exact year when he left London is unknown; most scholars put it at about 1611; if so, he had not taken a very active part in the affairs of the Company for some time before that date.

His name is last mentioned in a list of the Company in Augustine Philips' Will (May 1605—see p. 170); it is omitted from the list of actors in Jonson's *Volpone* (1607) and the *Alchemist* (1610). Moreover the output of his plays slackens off considerably after 1607, which suggests that the statement (c. 1663) of Dr. John Ward, Vicar of Stratford, is correct:

"Hee frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his elder days livd at Stratford, and supplied the stage with two plays every year, and for that had an allowance so large that hee spent att the rate of a thousand a year, as I have heard." <sup>1</sup>

Between 1598 and 1608, Shakespeare is credited with about sixteen plays, but from 1608 to 1616 only four. He certainly kept closely in touch with the King's Players, and there is documentary evidence that he was often in London. He gave evidence in the Bellott Case in May 1612, purchased some property in Blackfriars in March 1614, and in December the Stratford Town Council addressed a letter to him about a local squabble over some enclosures.

By 1607 two new writers were beginning to

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines*, ii, 70.

attract notice—Beaumont and Fletcher. In this year some commendatory verses of the former were printed with Jonson's *Volpone*; the latter had written the *Woman Hater*. Their partnership began in 1608 with *Philaster*, produced by the Chapel Children at Blackfriars where, perhaps, Jonson had introduced them.

The collaboration of Beaumont and Fletcher is the most famous of all literary partnerships, and they owe not a little of their reputation to the interest which it attracted. Most other playwrights had collaborated at some time or other, but the friendship of these two seemed unique. Aubrey has, as usual, a most picturesque account :

“I have heard Dr. John Earles (since bishop of Sarum) who knew them say that his—Beaumont's—maine businesse was to correct the overflowings of Mr. Fletcher's witt. They lived together on the Banke side, not far from the Play-house, both batchelors; lay together—from Sir James Hales, etc.; had one wench in the house between them, which they did so admire; the same cloathes and cloake, &c., betweene them.”<sup>1</sup>

Both poets were of gentle birth. John Fletcher

<sup>1</sup> Aubrey's *Lives*, ed. A. C. Clarke, i. 95-6.

(born at Rye in 1579) was the son of Dr. Richard Fletcher, a Churchman of some importance—

“bred in Benet Colledge in Cambridge. He was afterwards Dean of Peterborough at what time Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay, to whom he made, saith my Author, *verbosam Orationem, a wordy speech*, of her past, present and future condition, wherein he took more pains than he received thanks from her who therein was most concerned.

“Hence he was preferred Bishop of Peterborough, and at last of London; my Authour saith he was *Praesul splendidus*, and indeed he was of a comly presence, and Queen Elizabeth knew full well,

“*Gratior est pulchro veniens e corpore virtus.*”

“The jewel *Vertue* is more grac’d  
When in a proper person cas’d.”

Which made her always, on an equality of desert, to reflect favourably on such who were of graceful countenance and stature. . . .

“He married a Lady of this County, who one commendeth for very virtuous; which if so, the more happy she in herself, though unhappy that the World did not believe it. Sure I am, that Queen Elizabeth (who hardly held the second matches of Bishops *excusable*), accounted his marriage a trespass on his gravity, whereupon

he fell into her deep displeasure. Hereof this Bishop was sadly sensible, and, seeking to *lose* his sorrow in a *mist* of smoak, died of the immoderate taking thereof, June the 15th, 1596.”<sup>1</sup>

Of the poet himself, Fuller writes :

“ He had an excellent wit, which, the back-friends to Stage-plays will say, was *neither idle, nor well imploy’d* ; for he and Francis Beaumont, Esquire, like Castor and Pollux (most happy when in conjunction) raised the English to equal the Athenian and Roman Theater ; Beaumont bringing the *ballast* of judgement, Fletcher the *sail* of phantasie ; both compounding a Poet to admiration.

“ Meeting once in a Tavern, to contrive the rude draught of a Tragedy, Fletcher undertook *to kill the King* therein ; whose words being overheard by a listener (though his Loyalty not to be blamed therein), he was accused of high Treason ; till, the mistake soon appearing, that the plot was onely against a Dramatick and Scenical King, all wound off in merriment.

“ Nor could it be laid to Fletcher’s charge, what Ajax doth to Ulysses :

“ *Nihil hic Diomede remoto.*”

“ When *Diomede* was gone,  
He could do nought alone.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Fuller, *Worthies of Kent*.

For, surviving his Partner, he wrote good comedies himself, though inferiour to the former ; and no wonder, if *a single thread* was not so strong as a *twisted* one. He died (as I am inform'd) in London, of the plague, in the first of King Charles, 1625." <sup>1</sup>

The partnership lasted until 1613, when Beaumont married and left London. Three years later he died and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Beaumont and Fletcher may certainly claim to have influenced drama as much as either Shakespeare or Jonson. In *Philaster*, their first joint play, they strike a new note ; they gain their effects by subtlety of plot. The audience is left in suspense until the very last scene, not knowing whether the issue will be happy or tragic, and, when the happy ending does occur, there is no wrenching of probability. The emotions are excited because we want to know "what will happen next."

On the other hand, their work suffers from "staginess" ; their plays asked for no great effort of the mind, seared no emotions, and were, in short, infinitely easier to watch than Shake-

<sup>1</sup> Fuller, *Worthies of Northamptonshire*.

spare's later tragedy. The new writers amused ; Shakespeare hurt. Nor must it be forgotten that Beaumont and Fletcher wrote for the audiences of private playhouses.

Although *Philaster* is undoubtedly a good play, it might have been made into a marvellous tragedy. Perhaps its authors felt this when they wrote *A Maid's Tragedy*, the story of which has some rather similar elements—a pathetic but slightly unconvincing play to read, though perhaps more plausible when acted on the stage. However, when they produced *King and No King*, they definitely went back to the happy ending in a drama which rises to a wonderful climax, but falls into absurdity because the inevitable ending is fobbed off by that ancient device “the strawberry mark on the left elbow.” Even when they do give unhappy endings they are seldom more than “pathetic.”

This new style had so definite an influence on the development of English drama that it cannot be passed over. Even Shakespeare may be suspected of having given happy endings to the *Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* because audiences were refusing to have their emotions lacerated by genuine tragedy.



Somewhere between 1606 and 1608—probably the summer of the latter year—Beaumont wrote Jonson the famous letter “Written before he and Master Fletcher came to London with two of the precedent<sup>1</sup> comedies, then not finished, which deferred their merry meetings at the Mermaid.” As it throws considerable light on the author’s character and circle, it is here reproduced in full :

“ The sun (which doth the greatest comfort bring  
To absent friends, because the self-same thing  
They know they see, however absent) is  
Here our best hay-maker, (forgive me this !  
It is our country’s style). In this warm shine  
I lie, and dream of your full Mermaid wine.  
*Oh, we have water mix’d with claret lees,*  
Drink apt to bring in drier heresies  
Than beer, good only for the sonnet’s strain,  
With fustian metaphors to stuff the brain ;  
So mix’d, that, given to the thirstiest one,  
’Twill not prove alms, unless he have the stone :  
I think with one draught man’s invention fades,  
Two cups had quite spoil’d Homer’s Iliades.  
’Tis liquor that will find out Sutcliff’s wit,  
Lie where he will, and make him write worse yet.  
Fill’d with such moisture, in most grievous qualms,  
Did Robert Wisdom write his singing psalms ;

---

This letter was first published in the 1647 Folio of Beaumont and Fletcher’s Plays.

And so must I do this : And yet I think  
It is a potion sent us down to drink,  
By special Providence, keeps us from fights,  
Makes us not laugh when we make legs to knights.  
'Tis this that keeps our minds fit for our states,  
A medicine to obey our magistrates :  
For we do live more free than you ; no hate,  
No envy at one another's happy state,  
Moves us ; we are all equal ; every whit  
Of land that God gives men here is their wit,  
If we consider fully ; for our best  
And gravest man will with his main house jest,  
Scarce please you ; we want subtilty to do  
The city tricks, lie, hate and flatter too :  
Here are none that can bear a painted show,  
Strike when you wink, and then lament the blow ;  
Who, like mills set the right way for to grind,  
Can make their gains alike with every wind ;  
Only some fellows, with the subtlest pate  
Amongst us, may perchance equivocate  
At selling of a horse, and that's the most.  
Methinks the little wit I had is lost  
Since I saw you ; for wit is like a rest  
Held up at tennis, which men do the best  
With the best gamesters : What things have we seen  
Done at the Mermaid ! Heard words that have been  
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,  
As if that every one from whence they came  
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest  
And had resolved to live a fool the rest  
Of his dull life ; then when there hath been thrown  
Wit able enough to justify the town

For three days past ; wit that might warrant be  
For the whole city to talk foolishly  
Till that were cancell'd ; and when that was gone,  
We left an air behind us, which alone  
Was able to make the two next companies  
Right witty ; though but downright fools, mere wise.  
When I remember this, and see that now  
The country gentlemen begin to allow  
My wit for dry-bobs, then I needs must cry,  
I see my days of ballading grow nigh ;  
I can already riddle, and can sing  
Catches, sell bargains, and I fear shall bring  
Myself to speak the hardest words I find,  
Over as oft as any, with one wind,  
That takes no medicines : But one thought of thee  
Makes me remember all these things to be  
The wit of our young men, fellows that shew  
No part of good, yet utter all they know ;  
Who, like trees of the garden, have growing souls.  
Only strong Destiny, which all controuls,  
I hope hath left a better fate in store  
For me thy friend, than to live ever poor,  
Banish'd unto this home : Fate once again  
Bring me to thee, who canst make smooth and plain  
The way of knowledge for me, and then I,  
Who have no good but in thy company,  
Protest it will my greatest comfort be  
To acknowledge all I have to flow from thee.  
Ben, when these scenes are perfect, we 'll taste wine ;  
I 'll drink thy muse's health, thou shalt quaff mine."

This poem has been responsible for the rather

doubtful tradition that at the Mermaid were gathered all the wits, poets and dramatists of the age; and that here Jonson and Shakespeare attacked each other in the good-natured "wit-combats" mentioned by Fuller. The legend is so often repeated that it is worth examining it at greater length.

The full story is that Sir Walter Raleigh formed a "Wits Club" at the Mermaid Tavern, whither Jonson, Fletcher and Beaumont resorted. Raleigh was the patron of Marlowe, who "must" have been there; Jonson "must" also have brought "his friend Shakespeare."

It is a pity that so picturesque a legend should have such doubtful foundations. Raleigh can have had no connection with the Club after 1603 because he was a prisoner in the Tower. Jonson had little claims on the great before 1598, when *Every Man in his Humour* brought him into prominence; nor was Shakespeare likely to be a welcome guest at that time. He was a player, a person of incomparably lower social standing, and can scarcely have begun to "assume the gentleman" before 1599. Again, from 1599 to 1601 Jonson was at enmity with Shakespeare and his Company. This leaves only the two years 1601

to 1603. Moreover, as it happens, neither does Beaumont mention Shakespeare nor Fuller the Mermaid Tavern. Marlowe can have had no connection with any such club, as he died thirteen years before Beaumont's letter.

The truth, we may venture to suggest, is this. Raleigh founded a Club about 1592 which discussed religious and other problems; but that after the "heresy hunt" of 1593-4 this Club ceased. The Mermaid tradition arose from a hasty conclusion that, in the first place, because Jonson was accustomed to visit Raleigh in the Tower and was tutor to his son in 1612, there was an earlier connection between them; in the second that both Beaumont and Fuller are writing about the same events. It is, however, only fair to add that, as an entry in Henslowe's *Diary* shows, the Mermaid had some connection with the players :

"Layd owt for the Company at the  
mermayd when we weare at owre a  
grement the 21 of aguste 1602 toward } ix<sup>s</sup> " 1  
ou<sup>r</sup> supe the some of

A less exalted picture of "the Poet at the

Ordinary" is given in Dekker's *Guls Horne Booke* :

"If you be a Poet,<sup>1</sup> and come into the Ordinary (though it can be no great glory to be an ordinary Poet) order yourselfe thus. Obserue no man, doff not cap to that Gentleman to day at dinner, to whom, not two nights since, you were beholden for a supper; but, after a turne or two in the roome, take occasion (pulling out your gloues) to haue some *Epigram*, or *Satyre*, or *Sonnet* fastned in one of them, that may (as it were vomittingly to you) offer it selfe to the Gentlemen: they will presently desire it: but, without much coniuration from them, and a pretty kind of counterfet loathnes in yourselfe, do not read it; and though it be none of your owne, sweare you made it. Mary, if you chaunce to get into your hands any witty thing of another mans, that is somewhat better, I would counsell you then, if demand bee made who composed it, you may say: faith, a learned Gentleman, a very worthy friend. And this seeming to lay it on another man will be counted either modestie in you, or a signe that you are not ambitious of praise, or else that you dare not take it vpon you, for feare of the sharpnesse it carries with it.

<sup>1</sup> It is quite possible that Dekker is making fun of Jonson in the whole of this passage.

Besides, it will adde much to your fame to let your tongue walke faster then your teeth, though you be neuer so hungry, and, rather then you should sit like a dumb Coxcomb, to repeat by heart either some verses of your owne, or of any other mans, stretching euen very good lines vpon the rack of the censure ; though it be against all law, honestie, or conscience, it may chaunce saue the price of your Ordinary, and beget you other *Suppliments*. Mary, I would further intreat our Poet to be in league with the Mistresse of the Ordinary, because from her (vpon condition that he will but ryme knights and yong gentlemen to her house, and maintaine the table in good fooling) he may easily make vp his mouth at her cost, *Gratis*.<sup>1</sup>

The results of the Byron incident (see p. 179) were far-reaching. The Children were not again allowed to resume at Blackfriars. Thereupon Evans' partners, seeing that there was now nothing to gain by continuing the business—especially as the plague broke out at this time—divided the movable properties of the Company and left. Evans himself appealed to Burbage to release him from the agreement.

The proposal was very opportune for the

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Grosart, II, 240.

King's Men, who had found that the Bankside was not altogether an ideal spot for a playhouse. The Globe was built in marshy ground which was soon turned into thick mud by the winter rains. Moreover, during the dark months it was almost inaccessible from the City. Accordingly, as there was now no local opposition, Richard Burbage took over the Blackfriars in August 1608, going into partnership with his brother Cuthbert, his old fellows Shakespeare, Hemings, Condell, and Slye, and his tenant Evans. Each partner held an equal share and the profits were divided on the same system as at the Globe.

The King's Men had now two houses: the Globe which they used during the summer, and the Blackfriars where they could act all the winter undisturbed by rain or cold. At their winter quarters they played in the midst of the best class of their audience. The experiment was a great success; according to one witness they gained £1000 more each winter by the new arrangement. Burbage seems also to have taken over some of the play books, as *Philaster*, originally written for the Children, became a play of the King's Men.

By the suppression of the Children at Black-



friars, the poets who wrote for them were left idle. Jonson, for the most part, was now otherwise employed. Chapman, encouraged by his patron Prince Henry, devoted himself to finishing his great translation of the *Iliad*, and abandoned dramatic writing—in which it must be confessed he never excelled. Beaumont and Fletcher turned to the King's Men.

The somewhat different conditions at the Blackfriars may often be traced in the plays which were produced there; one small indication of a play written for a private theatre being the use of "cornets" for "trumpets" in the stage directions. Modern textual critics are coming to believe that many of the plays of Shakespeare have been hacked and mutilated since they were first written. *Hamlet* exists in three versions; the *Merry Wives* seems likely to have been an adaptation of an old play—and more "old play" than Shakespeare. Even such examination favourites as *Julius Cæsar* and *Henry V* are now suspect. It is well known that many popular plays were more or less rewritten on revival, and if the alterations are as great as modern discoveries seem to suggest, it is quite possible that many of the cuts and additions were

made to suit the peculiarities of the private theatre.

One little problem in visualizing some of Shakespeare's greater tragedies on the open stage of the Globe Theatre is to picture certain of the night scenes. In the earlier plays, such episodes as the Balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* or the flight of Jessica from Shylock do not necessarily need real darkness for their effect. But it is difficult to imagine any actor on an open-air stage making a success of

"Put out the light, and then put out the light"  
or,

"How ill this taper burns,"

because in these scenes attention is deliberately focussed on the taper, a somewhat feeble object in broad daylight. In the private theatres the windows were darkened when a night scene was being played.<sup>1</sup>

In other ways, too, private theatres influenced the progress of drama. The players, finding that

<sup>1</sup> Dekker, describing how the shops were shut up to welcome Candlelight, says, "the Citty lookt like a priuate Play-house, when the windowes are clapt downe, as if some *Nocturnal*, or dismal, *Tragedy* were presently to be acted before all the *Trades-men*."—*The Seauen Deadly Sinnes*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith, Percy Reprints, p. 30.

the select audiences were more profitable and less uncertain than the general public, naturally laid themselves out to please their best customers. Hence, after a few years, writers submitted their best work to the criticism of a narrow circle; drama ceased to be a vital amusement of the people and became subject to the whims of a clique of courtiers.

Five years later the King's Men were summoned to Court to entertain the Elector Palatine and his bride Princess Elizabeth "on their wedding-day at night" (February 1613). It was the most splendid of all their Court appearances; the King was proud of his players and wished to show them off to his son-in-law; the players did their best to honour their master. It seems that Shakespeare, now in retirement at Stratford for most of the year, was called on to write one more play; and in the *Tempest* he bade farewell to his fellows, his patron and his Art. This was his swan-song, and with Prospero's Epilogue the Age of Shakespeare came to an end.

One more event needs to be chronicled. In the following summer the Globe Theatre was burnt to the ground—to the amazement and sorrow of all playgoers. There are several

accounts of this disaster, the best being that of Sir Henry Wotton in a letter to his nephew Sir Edmund Bacon, dated 2 July 1613 :

“ Now, to let matters of State sleep, I will entertain you at the present with what hath happened this Week at the Banks side. The Kings Players had a new Play, called *All is True*, representing some principal pieces of the Reign of *Henry* the 8<sup>th</sup>. which was set forth with many extraordinary Circumstances of Pomp and Majesty, even to the matting of the Stage ; the Knights of the Order, with their Georges and Garter, the Guards with their embroidered Coats, and the like : sufficient in truth within a while to make Greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous. Now, King *Henry* making a Masque at the Cardinal *Wolsey's* House, and certain Cannons being shot off at his entry, some of the Paper, or other stuff, wherewith one of them was stopped, did light on the Thatch, where being thought at first but an idle smoak, and their Eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly, and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole House to the very ground.

“ This was the fatal period of that virtuous Fabrique ; wherein yet nothing did perish, but Wood and Straw, and a few forsaken Cloaks ; only one Man had his Breeches set on fire, that

would perhaps have broyled him, if he had not by the benefit of a provident wit put it out with Bottle-Alc." <sup>1</sup>

The inevitable ballad followed, which is worth reproducing as it gives some amusing details of the actors :

A SONNET UPON THE PITIFUL BURNING  
OF THE GLOBE PLAYHOUSE IN LONDON

Now sitt thee downe, Melpomene,  
Wrapt in a sea-cole robe,  
And tell the doleful tragedie,  
That late was played at Globe ;  
For noe man that can singe and saye  
Was scard on St. Peters daye.

*Oh sorrow, pittiful sorrow, and yett all this is true.*

All yow that please to understand,  
Come listen to my storie,  
To see Death with his rakeing brand  
Mongst such an auditorye ;  
Regarding neither Cardinalls might,  
Nor yett the rugged face of Henry the eight.

*Oh sorrow, etc.*

This fearful fire beganne above,  
A wonder strange and true,  
And to the stage howse did remove,  
As round as taylors clewe,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Reliquae Wottonianae*, ed. 1685, p. 425.

And burnt downe both beame and snagge,  
And did not spare the silken flagg.

*Oh sorrow, etc.*

Out run the knightes, out runne the lordes,  
And there was great adoe ;  
Some lost their hattes, and some their swordes ;  
Then out runne Burbage too.  
The reprobates, thoughe druncke on Munday,  
Prayd for the Foole and Henry Condy.

*Oh sorrow, etc.*

The perrywigges and drumme-heades frye,  
Like to a butter firkin ;  
A wofull burneing did betide  
To many a good buffe jerkin.  
Then with swollen eyes, like druncken Flemminges  
Distressed stood old stuttering-Heminges. . . .

*Oh sorrow, etc.*<sup>1</sup>

The fire was a severe but by no means irretrievable loss to the King's Men, who could now fall back on Blackfriars. Within a year the new house, finer than its predecessor, was opened.

The old Globe had been peculiarly associated with Shakespeare. It had been built as he was reaching the maturity of his genius, and it owed most of its prosperity to his fame. The new Globe was the home of another generation. It

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines*, i. 310.

was more genteel; Fletcher wrote for it, and occasionally Jonson—now Laureate—much translated from the bricklayer author of *Every Man in his Humour*. But with a new generation ideas naturally changed. As taste altered and degenerated, the old masterpieces passed out of favour; the old actors disappeared, Burbage in 1619, and Hemings, the last survivor, in 1630.

The Fellowship was ended.

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